



THE INDEPENDENT

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SIMPLY COLLECT THREE TOKENS. SEE PAGE 14



'Senators, how say you?' 'Not guilty on all counts'

BILL CLINTON could breathe easily last night for the first time in 13 months, after the incus of the Monica Lewinsky affair was finally lifted from his presidency.

In only the second such impeachment vote in its history, the US Senate handsomely acquitted William Jefferson Clinton, President of the United States, of the two Articles of Impeachment against him, making him not only the second President to be impeached and tried, but the second to prevail. He also avoided any formal motion of censure, which was rejected by the Senate without a vote.

The final votes - 55-45 against conviction on the charges of perjury, 50-50 on the obstruction of justice charges - in a Senate where Mr Clinton's Republican opponents enjoy a majority, constituted a triumph for the President and

BY MARY DEJEVSKY AND ANDREW MARSHALL in Washington

from his or her seat to deliver their verdict. For the half-hour duration of the two votes, the Senate was in utter silence, but for the single questions and answers called across the chamber. The Democrats' vote held solid for "not guilty"; but with nine Republicans defecting on the perjury charge, and five on the obstruction of justice charge, Mr Clinton was acquitted even more convincingly than expected, and considerably more than Andrew Johnson, who survived removal from office by a single vote.

At the close of proceedings, the Chief Justice was presented with a "golden gavel" - an award reserved for Congressional chairmen who have presided for 100 hours - and given a standing ovation. In a closing speech, Mr Rehnquist spoke of the "more free-form environment" he had found at the Senate compared with his own Supreme Court, but said he was leaving "a wiser, but not a sadder man".

A Senate trial, a splicing of politics and justice, is one of the rare times when the three branches of the United States system come together. Hailed as a living "civics" lesson for Americans, it was also a demonstration for the world of American democracy at its limits.

The President was expected to make some form of address after the vote, acknowledging once again the pain he had caused his family and colleagues.

The presidential line is that the White House will be a "gloat-free zone" after impeachment is swept away, with the President expected instead to give the impression that he wants business as usual to resume. Spokesmen said there was a "sense of relief", but were not even sure whether the President would watch the key moment on television.

The White House has discounted reports that it will use every opportunity to get back at the Congressional Republicans who led the impeachment assault, saying that would be counterproductive.

Of the Republican senators who gave public explanations of their decision to break with their party's "guilty" consensus, a majority cited legal considerations, including the fact that in their view the evidence was exclusively circum-



President Bill Clinton at the White House last year as the Lewinsky scandal raged; his tenure is now secure **APP**

stantial. Political considerations were not far away, however, as the majority represent states where pro-Clinton sentiment is strong.

Arlen Specter, from Pennsylvania, distinguished himself by calling out "not proven" when asked for his vote, a non-constitutional option that was recorded, after a frisson, as "not guilty".

Even though the last elections are only three months past, Washington is already

gearing up for the 2000 elections, with presidential candidates emerging from the Republican Party fund-raising activity getting into high gear and lists of vulnerable Congressional districts being drawn up.

The Democrats will try to capitalise on their lead in the polls, which is partly derived from public antagonism towards the Republican stance on impeachment.

The final public chapter of

the Bill and Monica affair closed a year that had seen comedy and tragedy in equal measure and tested every pillar of American society and its democracy.

It had augmented American discourse at every level, from high political and constitutional argument through inspirational rhetoric, to ribald anecdotes and coarse innuendo.

It had also seen the return of some of its leading characters in the final week: the filmed

testimony of the leading lady, Monica Lewinsky, in the Senate chamber, and yesterday, in the press and on television, the self-defence of Linda Tripp, the woman whose tape-recordings of her young friend started the whole sorry scandal.

While the public aspects of the Monica Lewinsky affair are now closed, the private pain will probably persist. There has been only speculation about the harm that Mr Clinton has caused to his family.

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his legal team, falling well short of the two-thirds majority required for conviction. But the 50-50 vote on the obstruction charge (with five Republican not-guilty votes) seemed an eminently fitting conclusion to a case that had divided legal minds across the US.

It was another day of drama and history on the Capitol, the culmination of the constitutional process of presidential impeachment not seen since the trial of Andrew Johnson in 1868. At midday, after three days of closed debate and as many weeks of open argument, the heavy doors of the Senate chamber were swung open, and reporters, Congressional staff and visitors crowded into the galleries for the final vote.

The presiding judge, Chief Justice William Rehnquist, ordered the reading of the first Article of Impeachment, and then commanded: "Senators, how say you?" Is the respondent, William Jefferson Clinton, guilty or not guilty?

Called by name, in alphabetical order, each senator rose

BY DAVID USBORNE in New York

like nearly everyone else in this city, he had long ago grown weary of the business. Mr Fungini shared in the sentiment of the vast majority - that at last politicians in the capital, President Clinton included, "will be able to get on with the business of the country".

Not that the President comes out smelling like Valentine's roses. "He needs a smack right on the back of the head for what he did - really, he was pretty stupid," said Mr Fungini.

ini. "But I never believed that he should be impeached. I just don't think so."

On the corner by the hotel, a white-bearded tramp was collecting money in an old cigar box. From Puerto Rico, Abraham said: "I told my people before the trial started that he was going to get off. Listen, they all do it down there and the Republicans were paying people to go after the President."

In the police sub-station that sits immediately beneath the hotel, there was a rare voice of disappointment at the verdict. The cop in charge yesterday,

who asked to remain anonymous, thought the President should have been thrown out. "If I had committed perjury and lied like he did, I would have been out of a job and people would have been angry if I didn't lose my job," the officer explained.

And there were hints of chagrin too on 47th Street, lined with jewellery shops owned by the Jewish community. "He lied and he owes another apology to Lewinsky," said one owner, who gave only his first name, Abe. "You know there are plenty of people who committed perjury

who are sitting in jail now. Clinton is happy-go-lucky and he gets away with it. That bothers me."

On 6th Avenue, Rich Munchesang, a building engineer, was clearing a street drain outside Rupert Murdoch's Fox News Channel. But Mr Munchesang had tuned out months ago. "So he lied, but what was he meant to say there, right in front of his wife? That he had slept with another woman?"

The news programmers are going to have to find new subjects to report, but the Lewin-

sky affair is just heating up for the publishing industry, which is expected to unleash an avalanche of titles. Among them there will be, *Ask Not, Tell Not: The Triangulation of William Jefferson Clinton*, and *The Point of Knives: The Triumph and Tragedy of Kenneth Starr*. Whether there are readers out there with enough appetite for such books remains to be seen. One, however, is certain to get attention. It is *Monica's Story*, compiled by Ms Lewinsky with the help of the British biographer Andrew Morton.

Shrug from the sidewalk in Main St, USA

IF YOU wanted to know the outcome of the trial of President Clinton - as if it was in much doubt - Times Square was the place to be. You could not miss the acquittal headlines rushing by on the electronic ticker or blaring from the NBC Jumbotron - a giant TV suspended in the sky - at the square's southern end.

This, though, was an historic event without an audience.

"Trial? What trial?" asked Jimmy Fungini, the doorman at the Doubletree Hotel, under the shadow of the Jumbotron. He was joking, of course, but

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TODAY'S TELEVISION
BACK PAGE

THE INDEPENDENT New sections, more readers

Next week, The Independent will be even bigger and better. On Monday, we launch a new 12-page broadsheet sports supplement, which will include reports and analysis of the week-end's action by our award-winning team of writers and photographers. As well as reports from the FA Cup fifth round, England's one-day cricket final against Australia, and grand prix athletics from Birmingham, Richard Williams is granted a frank interview with Will Carling, and Brian Viner begins a new weekly column. Plus, a new, comprehensive briefing for the week ahead, a look at the best sports sites on the Internet and an expanded racing service. Every Monday, it's a must-read for sports fans.

And on Wednesday next week, we are launching a new weekly business supplement, Business Review. This will be in addition to the business pages in the news section, and will contain interviews, comment and features from our acclaimed team of writers including Hamish McRae, Jeremy Warner, Diane Coyle and Nic Cicutti. We shall also be improving our Wednesday investment pages with more tips on how to make your money work best for you.

These two new sections are launched at a time of renewed success for The Independent and The Independent on Sunday. The Independent's audited circulation for January is 219,549, an increase of more than 1,000 copies a day on our December figure. The Independent on Sunday's January figure is 252,587, a rise of almost 3,000.

Further recognition for the quality of both papers' journalism came in this week's announcement of the shortlist for the British Press Awards.

Five of our writers have been shortlisted: Hamish McRae (Financial Journalist of the Year); Deborah Ross (Feature Writer of the Year); John Lichfield (Foreign Reporter of the Year); Donald Macintyre (Specialist Reporter of the Year) and Blake Morrison (Critic of the Year).

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...TO MONICA LEWINSKY, THE STARR REPORT, IMPEACHMENT BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES AND THE FINAL SENATE VERDICT

6 August
Lewinsky testifies in front of a grand jury for six hours.

17 August
On the day of his long-awaited testimony the President tells the grand jury, and the nation, that he had a relationship with Lewinsky that was "not appropriate. He does not apologise."

20 August
Clinton orders the bombing of a "chemical weapons plant" in Sudan and a terrorist base in Afghanistan.

4 September
Clinton apologises for the affair: "I'm sorry," he tells



America.
9 September
Starr sends his finished report to Congress under high security. He has found "substantial and credible information...that may constitute grounds for impeachment." Clinton is contrite on

TV.
11 September
The Starr report, in all its damning, lurid detail, is published on the Internet.

21 September
Clinton's video testimony to the grand jury is shown on TV, but it does not trigger his anticipated downfall.

3 November
Democrats increase seats in the Congressional mid-term elections - a massive boost for Clinton.

23 November
House speaker-elect Bob Livingston insists he wants an

impeachment vote even if it appears it will go in favour of the President.

9 December
The House votes to impeach Clinton.

20 December
Polls show Clinton's approval rating still rising.

18 December
Congressmen launch into a heated and controversial

debate on impeachment.

19 December
The House votes to impeach Clinton.

7 January 1999
Impeachment trial of the President begins in Senate.

24 January
Monica Lewinsky is interviewed privately by House prosecutors.

1-3 February
Lewinsky, Jordan and Blumenthal give videotaped deposition to House managers and the president's lawyers.

4 February
Senate votes to allow show-

ing of the videotaped testimony during the trial. Senators reject calling live witnesses.

8 February
House managers and White House lawyers present closing arguments.

9 February
Senate declines to change rules to allow open deliberations on impeachment articles and begins private deliberations.

12 February
Senate votes. President Clinton survives.

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scandal

Now the real reckoning for a shamed President

POLITICAL PROSPECTS

THE SMOKE has started to clear from the battlefield. The political casualties on both sides are being counted, and - on the Republican side at least, they are huge. But out of the mists of battle, President Bill Clinton emerges, still in office, as large as life and twice as boisterous, with two years of his Presidency left to run.

The past year has focused, to an unprecedented degree, on him, on his intimate life and his personal habits. The issue was not, as it was with Richard Nixon, all those angular staff members plotting war in the furthest corners of South East Asia while breeding dark conspiracies closer to home.

All of the accessories here - the Betty Curries and Vernon Jordans, ambassadors and private detectives - were apparently subordinate to the earthly desires of one man, President William Jefferson Clinton, and the ways in which he had gone about concealing them.

And it is tempting to conclude that his salvation, too, lay ultimately within himself, in his personal resources of strength and his popularity in the country.

He argued from the beginning to his former adviser Dick Morris that it would be necessary to struggle to win the case, that there were no short cuts. After he and Morris had discussed the possibility of an immediate admission of guilt, he concluded that that there was only one way out. "We just have to win," Mr Clinton said.

If there is one thing the past year has taught us about Bill Clinton - if we did not know it

BY ANDREW MARSHALL
in Washington

already - it is his remarkable resolve in the face of crisis, his ability to turn a major setback into a rousing victory.

He has three tasks ahead of him. The first is to show that he will move on, that politics is now about America and not about him. The second is to create a platform that will pay dividends for the Democrats in the next elections. The third, which will be the most difficult, is to persuade Americans that his Presidency was about more than just sex, lying about sex, and the obstruction of justice.

There will be plenty of talk in the next few days about the huge damage done to political institutions, to the Presidency, to politics itself, and most of it - in the short term - can be written off. The President has confounded his enemies, and he has emerged above the fray.

The institution of the Presidency has been weakened for decades, at least since Watergate, arguably since Lyndon B Johnson's decision not to stand again in 1968 after the disasters of Vietnam. Bill Clinton's personal life may be in ruins, his dignity may be in shreds, but he is still President. And he has huge assets to deploy. What saved him was, in part, the astonishing way he has of communicating with the people of America, individually, en masse, on television, from the rostrum or the flagstones. It is a pre-modern skill: it draws those around him, mystifies and fascinates them.

He will go out into America,

campaign before the election even gets underway, and make some noise. He also has a firmer grasp on his own party than ever before.

Relationships have been formed under fire for the past year that will be crucial in the next 12 months, especially with Richard Gephardt, leader of the Democrats in the House. With Mr Gephardt and the Vice-President, Al Gore, he will now start to shape a strategy for keeping the White House, winning the Congress and making a clean sweep in 2000.

What he cannot judge, what no one can at the moment, is what will happen next. The personal consequences for the President have been enormous. If it is true that part of his deal with his wife was that his philandering would be at least discreet, then that bargain is over. Not only the details of what he did, but his thoughts on his marriage - that it was loveless, that he was not sure if it would survive the next two years - are now horribly public. His relationship with his daughter, Chelsea, is said to have suffered particularly badly.

But the riddles and the contradictions of impeachment, and its most deep scars, do not lie in the personality and biology of the President. They lie in the internal dynamics of Washington, in the southern states where white conservatives came to loathe him so much, and in the hearts and minds of people who believed they could topple a President, even when it was clear that that was not what the country wanted. We have been told so



Bill and Hillary Clinton in the Rose Garden at the White House on the day the House of Representatives voted to impeach him Reuters

often that the President's survival was puzzling: that we have almost forgotten this man was elected to office, twice, and probably would be again if he could stand again.

For two decades, America has been changing. Clinton represents this nation better than the Republicans, and that shone through again and again. You do not have to think he is a good man, or honest, or the best President: you just had to watch the Republicans yesterday, wondering what had hit them, and realising that it was Bill Clinton. A year ago he was written off as terminally wounded. He had to win; he did; and now he will seek to win again.

The making of some and the damning of others

WINNERS AND LOSERS

ASIDE FROM President Bill Clinton, who has emerged from a year of scandal with his political authority undented and his approval ratings sky high, the Lewinsky scandal has produced a crop of winners and losers, some of them as unpredictable as Mr Clinton.

Hillary Clinton (winner)
The betrayed wife has emerged with her dignity intact, her popularity soaring and the prospect of her own political career on the horizon.

A year ago, Mrs Clinton, 51, turned what could have been an embarrassment into a personal triumph when she appeared on television to deny misconduct by her husband and blame a "vast right-wing conspiracy". When, seven months later, he confessed his "inappropriate conduct", she stood by him, campaigning the length and breadth of the nation for Democrats for the November mid-term elections.

She was also her husband's most effective weapon against his feminist critics, who felt "it's all right by Hillary, it's all right by us." Mrs Clinton now attracts as much, if not more public applause than her husband. The state of her marriage, however, is far from clear.

BY ANDREW MARSHALL
AND MARY DEJEVSKY

Kenneth Starr (loser)
Appointed independent prosecutor in 1994 to investigate the Whitewater land deal and other allegations of wrongdoing by President Clinton, extended his inquiry to cover the Lewinsky affair in January 1998.

Pilloried throughout the long and expensive investigation by the White House and Clinton supporters, Starr, 52, delivered his report last September, a rip-roaring read of sex and dissemblance in the White House, based mainly on Monica Lewinsky's confessions.

Starr was hailed by his (few) supporters as a conscientious seeker after truth and condemned by the rest as a sex-crazed investigator out to get the President. Despite periodic attempts to humanise his public image, he remained type-cast as a straitlaced zealot.

Cheryl Mills (winner)
Thirty-three-year-old lawyer who became a star after her passionate presentation of Clinton's case in the Senate. A slim, earnest woman, she spoke slowly and deliberately of the sanctity of the "rule of law" and

"those facts, those stubborn facts" that stood in the way of the obstruction of justice charge.

A self-styled "army brat" who grew up on military bases, mainly in Virginia, she was recruited by the White House from a Washington law firm when Mr Clinton came to office and is as loyal as any of his staff.

While a glittering legal career now promises, there is one shadow. She too is under investigation after evidence she gave to a Congressional committee relating to another White House scandal - the presence of confidential FBI files in the White House - was condemned as perjurious.

Newt Gingrich (loser)
Having pledged to use every opportunity in the campaign for the mid-term Congressional elections to condemn Mr Clinton's behaviour with Ms Lewinsky, the House Speaker, 55, saw his party suffer a net loss in the House of Representatives and only maintain its representation in the Senate. Accepting responsibility for his party's failure, Mr Gingrich resigned from his position and the House, becoming the highest-ranking and least predicted victim of the Lewinsky affair.

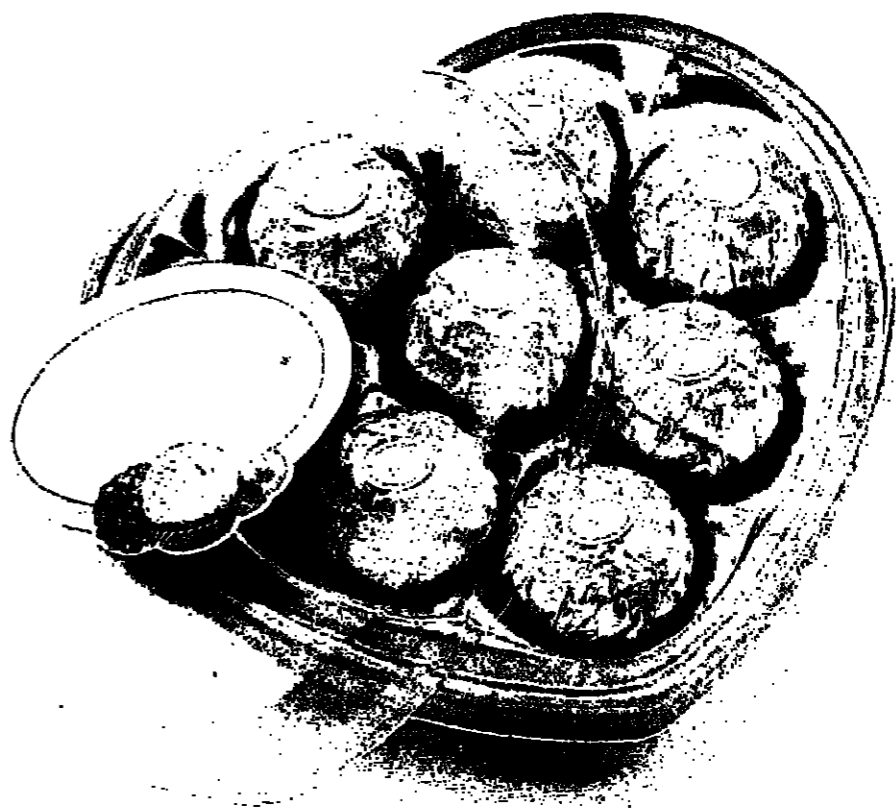
Matt Drudge (winner)
The Internet gossip columnist demonstrated to the world that a combination of brazen flair and modern technology can run rings around the hide-bound journalism-school graduates who comprise the cream of the American media.

Drudge, whose trademark tribly was a more and more frequent sight on television talk shows as the year progressed, has been shunned by the mainstream as a risk-taking maverick, but he was more often vindicated than not.

Paula Jones (loser)
An Arkansas native, now living in California, whose sexual harassment lawsuit against Mr Clinton set off the train of events that led to his impeachment.

Although the case was dismissed by an Arkansas judge last April before it came to court, Mr Clinton agreed to settle last December, rather than risk the case being revived on appeal.

While Ms Jones received \$850,000 (£530,000), much if not all of that will go on lawyers' fees and she did not even get the presidential apology she had stood out for.



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Art forger convicted of 'brilliant' fraud



Guilty: John Drewe (left) and John Myatt

A "CONSUMMATE and devious liar" was yesterday convicted of masterminding the biggest contemporary art fraud of the 20th century.

John Drewe, self-styled professor and nuclear physicist, plotted an international fraud that took in some of the art world's leading galleries and collectors. Among his victims were the Tate Gallery, Sotheby's, Christie's and the families of 20th century artists.

Drewe's activities were first revealed three years ago in an investigation by *The Independent*. Since then the paper has learnt that Drewe had previously passed information about art fraud to the police and that he had contacts in the Mafia.

He was convicted yesterday after a five-month trial, of seven charges, including conspiracy to defraud. A co-defendant, Daniel Stokas, was acquitted.

Southwark Crown Court was told that Drewe, 50, hired John Myatt, an unknown artist, and encouraged him to fake works in the style of Ben Nicholson, Marc Chagall and Alberto Giacometti. Myatt used a mixture of household emulsion, lubricating jelly and the contents of a vacuum cleaner to "age" the paintings. Drewe added authenticity by making frames from old wood and signing them with the artists' names.

Drewe's scheme relied on creating histories or provenances for these paintings, and over a period of months, he set about substantially altering and supplementing Britain's art archives to include details of his non-existent "works". At one

BY ANDREW BUNCOMBE

point, he even spent £20,000 to become a Fellow of the Tate Gallery, allowing him access to its vast records which he set about changing. He also faked catalogues from non-existent exhibitions which had displayed the paintings.

Although Drewe was charged in connection with just nine paintings, police believe that he and Myatt produced up to 200 works over a 10-year period which were sold in the US, Middle East and Europe.

While Myatt was paid just £250 a time, Drewe sold the paintings for up to £100,000. Police believe he may have profited by up to £2m.

Detective Sergeant Jonathan Searle of the Metropolitan Police's organised crime group, said yesterday: "This is quite simply the biggest contemporary art fraud the 20th century has ever seen. It was brilliantly carried out."

But the case has also highlighted a number of failings in the security of many of Britain's galleries and auction houses. Both the Tate and the Victoria and Albert Museum have since tightened their procedures.

One gallery owner said: "The trouble is that if the paintings are worth less than £100,000 no one bothers to check out their histories. They call themselves experts but they are just lazy."

Drewe, from Reigate, Surrey, and Myatt, 53, from Staffordshire, who had previously admitted his involvement, are to be sentenced on Monday.



Graham Sutherland's 'Somerset Maugham' (left) and 'Entrance to a Lane' (below centre), and Ben Nicholson's 'Cortivallo, Lugano' (above centre). Their styles were copied by the forgery gang. Right: The forgers' version of 'Crucifixion' by Sutherland



Top galleries and collectors were duped

IT WAS HARD to say what was wrong, the way the paint had been applied or maybe the colours the artist had used. Whatever it was, the moment Leslie Waddington looked at the paintings he was unhappy.

The Dubuffet certainly looked the part but - well - Mr Waddington had not been an art dealer for as long as he had without learning a thing or two. And Jean Dubuffet had been a friend of his.

Within days Mr Waddington phoned a contact within the Art and Antiques squad of Scotland Yard to express his concerns about the paintings he had seen up for auction.

Unknown to Mr Waddington, his call in the summer of 1995 was to help crack one of the most ingenious art frauds of all time. It also led to the

downfall of John Drewe, a brilliant but flawed criminal who "took an intellectual delight in fooling people".

The practise of copying expensive works of art and passing them off as the real thing is probably as old as art itself. But by creating provenances for his fakes, Drewe entered a new realm.

His plan was brilliant and effective. "He came to me to authenticate certain things. In the early days I probably did," admitted Sir Alan Bowness, a senior member of the Henry Moore Foundation. "They all had very good provenances. That is what was so clever."

Sir Alan should not feel too bad. Drewe's scam took in galleries, collectors and even some of the families of the artists he was imitating. Devi-

ous to the point of genius, when one dealer complained that a De Stael painting he had bought was an imitation, Drewe promptly gave him four sketches by Graham Sutherland as compensation. These also turned out to be fakes. The dealer kept the De Stael as a "£32,500 lesson".

Drewe was born John Cockett in Tonbridge, Kent, in February 1948, and grew up in Uckfield, Sussex, where the family lived in a farmhouse called Pleasant Farm. Little is known about his childhood but he left Bexleyheath Grammar School, aged 16, having gathered a handful of O-levels and took a job as a laboratory assistant with the Atomic Energy Authority. He left in 1967, having refused a request that he study for fur-

ther examinations. Drewe later embellished his humble position in Walter Mit-tyesque fashion, telling people he was a nuclear physicist.

Police have no record of him from then until 1980, when he started working as a part-time teacher at Channing School in Highgate, London. He also taught at Des Fardes House, in Hampstead.

In the Spring of 1986 Drewe was reading *Private Eye* magazine when he came across an advert placed by an artist looking for commissions. It read: "Genuine Fakes. 19th and 20th Century painting done." Once Drewe met the artist - John Myatt - the pair formed an effective, but unequal, partnership.

When police caught up with the pair, Myatt turned Queen's

evidence. Cross-examined in court by Drewe - who led his own defence - Myatt said: "I was very much your creature. I found you hypnotising, charming, challenging."

Drewe charmed scores of people. Once, he recruited a neighbour, Clive Bellman, to sell paintings. Knowing Mr Bellman was Jewish, Drewe told him he was selling the works to fund research to finally destroy the revisionist theory of the Holocaust.

Police inquiries were in their infancy when Mr Waddington called them, but Drewe was already known to them. Fourteen months earlier he had contacted the A&A squad offering information about the Mafia selling stolen paintings.

The officers met Drewe at the Battersea heliport, Lon-

don, where he arrived by helicopter. He gave police information on three paintings. When detectives checked, it transpired that two - a De Pisis and De Chirico - were stolen. Officers remain convinced that Drewe had genuine contacts within the Mafia.

Drewe's defence at the trial was that he was recruited to sell paintings to fund secret arms deals on behalf of a number of foreign governments, including South Africa's.

In creating false provenances for his paintings, Drewe altered - perhaps irretrievably - the archive material of many galleries. His actions have damaged records which help show whether paintings are genuine or, like the ones he sold, simply fakes.

ANDREW BUNCOMBE

Just said yes.

Make yourself heard.

(On Valentine's Day.)

ERICSSON

Republican
lost almost
everything

Tripp rebuild
her image

GM food harmed rats, says research

A GROUP of scientists warned of serious health dangers from eating genetically modified (GM) food yesterday, citing unpublished research allegedly showing that GM potatoes have damaged laboratory rats.

The independent scientists vigorously defended the work of Arpad Pusztai, an expert on plant toxins, who was forced to retire last year from his post at the Rowett Research Institute in Aberdeen after prematurely releasing the results of his experiments to the *World in Action* television programme.

Twenty researchers from around the world have signed a memorandum condemning the way Dr Pusztai was treated by the Rowett Institute, which said the 68-year-old scientist had become "muddled" over an experiment that did not in fact involve genetically modified potatoes.

Dr Pusztai was suspended and his annual contract not renewed. He has since been told not to talk publicly about his work on GM potatoes by his for-

mer employer.

But yesterday Vyvyan Howard, a toxicologist from Liverpool University, released data from further experiments carried out by Dr Pusztai which, said Dr Howard, supports the principal conclusion that genetically modified food can be harmful to health.

Dr Howard said that "transgenic" potatoes, which had an added gene responsible for a plant toxin called a lectin, produced damaging effects on the immune systems and internal organs of the laboratory animals. "There is obviously something going on with this transgenic potato which is not just due to the lectins. We don't have an answer to that. It needs further research," he said.

Stanley Ewen, of the department of pathology at Aberdeen University, released preliminary results of his own experiments, which showed that animals fed on GM pota-



Leaflets handed to customers at the supermarket chain Iceland detailed the effects of genetically modified food

Mark Chilvers

atoes experienced the take-up of lectin proteins into the cells of their intestines. "It may be that in GM food a drug-delivery system has been created, delivering something you didn't want to," Dr Ewen said.

Another supporter of Dr Pusztai, Professor Brian Goodwin, of Schumacher College in Dartington, Devon, said the latest results will strengthen support for an immediate moratorium on the growth of GM crops, a ban on patenting genes and an independent in-

quiry into the use of genetic engineering by the food and agricultural industries.

Ronald Finn, past president of the British Society of Allergy and Environmental Medicine, said Dr Pusztai's research raised serious concerns. "Dr Pusztai's results to date at the very least raise the suspicion that genetically modified potatoes may damage the immune system." If that happened, he said, the consequences of something like a flu epidemic could be extremely serious.

"You can imagine a doomsday scenario. If the immune system of the population was weakened, then the mortality would be increased many, many times."

Other scientists criticised Dr Pusztai's supporters for taking his research out of context. Professor Ray Baker, chief executive of the Biotechnology and Biological Research Council, said the potato experiments did not cast doubt on the safety of all GM food. "These potatoes were part of an experiment

and were never intended for commercial production, nor are they available on the market," he said.

As the row over Dr Pusztai erupted, Tony Blair yesterday rejected calls for a moratorium on GM food and played down mounting concern. "There is no GM food that can be sold in this country without going through a very long regulatory process," he said on BBC radio. "Let's proceed on the basis of genuine scientific analysis and inquiry, proceed with very great care

and caution and not get the facts mixed up."

Philip James, director of the Rowett Institute, vigorously defended his decision to suspend Dr Pusztai on the grounds that the lectin expert had become confused over key experiments on GM potatoes.

Dr James said that Dr Pusztai had claimed in media interviews to have found ill-effects on rats fed with GM potatoes with a lectin called GNA - a protein derived from the snowdrop plant - but in fact

he had mistaken these results for those on ordinary potatoes that had been deliberately laced with high concentrations of another, highly toxic lectin called Con A, which would never be used in human food.

Dr James strongly denied that he had come under any political pressure to dismiss Dr Pusztai.

The environmental pressure group Friends of the Earth called on the Prime Minister yesterday to hold an inquiry into the affair.

Committee 'biased towards bio-firms'

MEMBERS OF the Government committee that advises ministers on genetically modified food are so deeply involved in genetic research that they are unlikely to question it, a member of the committee said last night.

Several members of the Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes have links to the biotechnology companies, while others are academics researching the subject.

Kate Venables, a senior lecturer at the National Heart and Lung Foundation, who was appointed to the committee in May last year, said its remit was too narrow for it to address public concerns. "Scientists who are desperately excited by the idea of genetic modification are not going to be deflected from this as an interesting and exciting research tool."

"If companies have put millions of pounds into research of

BY ANDREW MULLINS
AND FRAN ABRAMS

something or other then I suspect the Government is going to listen to them. Wouldn't you?" she asked.

She was backed by other experts. Julie Shephard, of the Consumers' Association, was nominated by three organisations for a place on the committee but was rejected. There have been rumours that she was ruled out because of her sceptical views on the subject.

"I would not dream of accusing anybody of acting for improper reasons because of links with commercial interests. I don't think that happens. But I do think it happens in a more subtle way. You are hardly likely to question the fundamental assumptions about its safety if it would mean questioning your whole career," she said.

With political pressure

mounting from biotechnology firms including the American corporation Monsanto, the Downing Street policy unit is now arguing that the spread of the foods in Britain is inevitable.

The view of Liz Lloyd, who has responsibility for the subject in the unit and who met Monsanto representatives last year, was apparent when Tony Blair ruled out a moratorium on the crops at Prime Minister's Questions on Wednesday.

The only minister who has continued to argue for a moratorium, Michael Meacher, looks increasingly isolated on the subject.

The pressure for full-scale production of the crops is not just coming from companies within Britain, though. As reported in *The Independent* on Sunday last year, President Bill Clinton phoned Mr Blair to argue that Britain should accept genetically modified food.

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WHO SELLS WHAT

SAFEWAY
Confirmed own-brand tomato purée contains GM tomatoes but refused to give any other details

MARKS & SPENCER
Could not provide a list of GM products but said all own-brand foods with GM ingredients are labelled

TESCO
Provided a comprehensive list of own-brand foods with GM ingredients, including Value soups and sausages, pies, fresh sauces

SAINSBURY'S
Own-brand tomato purée

contains GM tomatoes. The store is currently labelling all own-label GM or GM derivative products. Examples are vegetarian bolognese sauce, soya mince, soya chunks, vegetarian moussaka

ICELAND STORES
Guarantees that all own-brand foods produced after 1 May are GM-free

KWIKSAVE
KwikSave No Frills bread and cheese products

HOUSEHOLD NAMES
Among products containing GM ingredients are: Pot

Noodle, Vesta Beef Risotto, Batchelor's Beanfeast, Godzila pizza-filled skinless sausages, some flavours of Walkers crisps, some flavours of Smith's crisps, Frazzles, Bacon Fries

PROCESSED FOOD
About 60 per cent of processed foods, such as pasta, pizza, baby foods, baby milk, contain GM soya. GM maize from the US may be present in soups, sauces, ready meals, curries, snacks, derivatives, such as soya oil and lecithin, may be present in thousands of processed foods. No obligation to label

Two more shows accused of using bogus guests

BY PAUL MCCANN
Media Editor

THE SCANDAL of hoaxers on so-called "confessional TV" chat shows widened yesterday after claims were made against two more shows.

It was claimed that the "boyfriend" of one guest on ITV's *Trisha* - presented by Trisha Goddard - was an actor she had met only the night before. Sharon Toffers said that she and the actor, Anthony Noel, met at a railway station before travelling to the show's studios in Norwich.

Another guest, Eddie Wheeler, said he had appeared on the show with a woman posing as a "former girlfriend". Mr Wheeler also claimed to have fooled *The Vanessa Show* and the now defunct ITV pro-



Trisha Goddard: The host who was 'duped'

gramme *The Time, The Place*. United Productions - which makes *Trisha* for Anglia TV - said it had been duped and "colluded" in recruiting guests. It said that all the guests are checked thoroughly - and

would be held "liable for any consequences if they are telling lies". The company also made *The Time, The Place* before it was scrapped.

The fresh allegations, made in *The Mirror*, came only a day after three members of the team behind BBC's *The Vanessa Show* were suspended after allegations that "guests" were in fact recruited from agencies.

The daytime chatshow format came under attack from the broadcasting minister Janet Anderson, who said there should be a question mark over the future of such programmes. Jocelyn Hay, chairman of the Voice of the Listener and Viewer, said: "This undermines the whole integrity of the programmes, and makes a farce of them."

Oscar nominee plays squeeze-box in pub

THERE ARE at least three reasons to admire the musician Stephen Warbeck apart from his musicianship.

One, he lives close to the Arsenal ground in north London and has no interest in football - doesn't even pretend to be interested (jokes about his proximity to Arsenal, b-o-r-i-n-g and so on, as the particular explanation for this unfashionable ignorance would simply pass him by).

Two, he can play the accordion for pass-the-parcel at children's parties for an hour or so and always manages to avoid "The Happy Wanderer".

Three, he drives around his partner and three young children in a VW camper of such age and interior confusion that it might still be on the run to Kathmandu.

Often (a fourth reason for admiration) he pilots a tandem.

On Tuesday he was nominated for an Oscar. You probably won't have read about this. Every newspaper reported that *Shakespeare in Love* had 13 nominations, and then lost interest in the list after Gwyneth Paltrow. (As rivers of information, newspapers are drying up - the idea that people without access to the Internet will constitute an information underclass is beginning to be true). In fact, I wouldn't have known either about his nomination in the "original musical and comedy score" category had we not been neighbours who dropped off children at the same school.

On Monday morning as we chatted on the pavement, I said how much we'd enjoyed *Shakespeare in Love* the previous night: "enjoyable" is the word that tends to be used about the film, as if being less enjoyable would make it finer and worthier.

Warbeck said he didn't think his music stood much chance of a nomination in the Academy Awards. The idea that it might had never occurred to me. Warbeck is such a wry and modest man and the Oscars, however absurd, seem to exist on a higher plane than the natural world; playtime for the Gods. The thought that they could reach down from their stretch limos in Hollywood and touch Warbeck on his tandem in Highbury was thrilling. If he was nominated - if he won! - our street, his street, the laundrette and takeaways in be-

NOTEBOOK



IAN JACK

When I went round to see him on Wednesday evening, squeezing past the tandem in the hall, he looked as usual, impressively domestic. His

clarinet-playing partner, Sarah, was out at a jazz gig. He had a sleeping baby, Mathilda, on his knee and a book of poems by Pablo Neruda on the table. His living room is unlikely to feature in *HELLO!* magazine. Too much evidence of living, jumbling happily across floors, shelves, chests, in fact over every flat surface, vertical and horizontal, apart from the ceiling. People in Beverly Hills might think of it as "Dickensian ethnic".

Some facts about Warbeck. He's 45, has been playing instruments since the age of four, started a rock group at school with his friend Andrew Ranken (who later joined the Pogues), and then, after university, began a theatre career at Stratford East which as it went on became uncertainly divided between acting and music.

On stage, he was Guildenstern in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* and Thérèse Raquin's husband in *Thérèse Raquin*. Off stage, he was the man at the piano, composing incidental themes and tunes.

Eventually his agent put it to him that he had to decide which he was, actor or musician, and he chose the latter. His big break came with the music for the *Prime Suspect* television series (directed by John Madden, the director of *Shakespeare in Love*, and a fellow nominee). Since then he's worked with Stephen Daldry at the Royal Court (*An Inspector Calls*) and scored the film *Mrs Brown*. He is also head of music at the Royal Shakespeare Company.

But all this is in a sense his private life. I had never



Stephen Warbeck, whose original score for 'Shakespeare in Love' has been nominated for an Oscar, at his home in Highbury. Pete Millson

glimpsed it before. Publicly, he's the composer-accordionist in a nine-piece band called the Kippers that plays at folk festivals in the summer and London pubs for the rest of the year. Paul Bradley, who was Nigel in *EastEnders*, does the vocals. Andrew Ranken, the ex-Pogue, is on drums. Warbeck said that the name is actually hKippers, though the h is silent.

This hint of harmless late 60s surrealism provides some idea of the music, which is difficult to describe. It would be believable as 1920s dance-band stuff from Valparaiso, or as folk tunes from Bakı. Warbeck said it owed a little to Kurt Weill, to klezmer, which is fast Jewish music on the clarinet, and to the Bonzo Dog Doo-Dah Band. It was, he said, "light-hearted European, world silly music".

In the Oscars, he has stiff competition from Randy Newman (*A Bug's Life*) and Stephen Schwartz (*The Prince of Egypt*). As this is Schwartz's fifth nomination - he did *The Lion King*, *Pocahontas*, and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* - the obvious money may be on

him. Of course, I hope Warbeck wins. He is looking forward so much to the clothes; and to the double who, when you nip out to the loo, takes your seat in the auditorium so that it never looks less than full. I hope he makes a speech about his mum and dad and the folks back home in Highbury.

Will it change him? You have to doubt it. Twelve years of Margaret Thatcher clearly had no success in that direction. In the meantime, Londoners can catch him and the Kippers at their next gig: the Weavers Arms, Newington Green Road, on 24 February. He's the one on the squeeze-box, not playing "The Happy Wanderer".

ACCORDING TO THE *New York Times* this week, a "significant minority" of Americans are taking extreme measures to protect themselves against the coming TEOTWAWKI which will occur in Y2K. An explanation:

TEOTWAWKI: The End Of The World As We Know It. Y2K: the year 2000, the so-

called millennium bug (more properly, the millennium flaw), when many computers are expected to malfunction because they won't be able to read the date correctly. They may think - if I've got this right - that things still to happen have already happened or, when they have happened, not happened.

Opinion polls show that 10 per cent of Americans expect to withdraw most or all of their money from banks, while 17 per cent expect to buy either a generator or a wood-burning stove. Sales of survival rations are expected to boom. The

American Red Cross recommends: "Stock disaster supplies to last several days to a week: non-perishable foods, stored water, and an ample supply of medications ... be prepared to relocate to a shelter for warmth ... have plenty of flashlights to hand."

This seemed to me mockably dire and fearful. Then I came across a booklet called the "Y2K Citizen's Action Guide" which is published by the *Utne Reader*, a magazine that could certainly be said to be on the alternative side of American life but is still an intelligent distance

from the bowie-knife, catch-kill-eat thinking of American survivalism. The guide is larded with so many quotes from so many seemingly distinguished figures that I began to look at my cellar in a new light.

"Failure to achieve compliance will jeopardise our way of life on this planet for some time to come" (Arthur Gross, chief information officer, the Inland Revenue Service).

"I cannot be optimistic, and I am generally concerned about the possibility of power shortages" (Senator Robert Bennett, chairman of the Senate's

special committee on Y2K). "Now the only hope is keeping the world economy from total deterioration" (Jeffrey Garten, Dean, Yale School of Management).

"It's far too late, and things are far too bad, for pessimism" (Dee Hock, founder Visa International).

More than 100 pages of advice follow, most of it detailed. Allow 20lb of brown rice or whole wheat per person per month, 15 grams of Vitamin C similarly, keep crackers crisp in metal containers. "Always prepare for the worst and hope for the best" is the overall philosophy and the tone is strangely joyful.

The coming crisis, the guide implies, may bring out the best in Americans. They will rediscover old virtues: neighbourliness, the civic spirit. It could do for Philadelphia what the Blitz did for Stepcy.

But perhaps one shouldn't be too sceptical. Peter de Jager, a technology consultant, is the writer widely credited with alerting the world to the problem when he published his essay, "Doomsday 2000", in a computer trade magazine more than five years ago.

In the current debate, he's not seen as an alarmist. In last month's *Scientific American*, he wrote in a balanced and admirably clear piece that he believed that severe disruptions would occur and last for about a month.

"This prediction might be optimistic: it assumes that people will have done what is necessary to minimise the number of single points of failure that could occur. Accomplishing that alone in the time remaining will require a Herculean effort unprecedented in the history of computers."

A few extra tins of baked beans then, not forgetting the Vitamin C.

nittee 'biased
ds bio-firms

e shows across
bonus artists



I've only
ever cried
in public once.
It was
Valentine's Day.

Ernest Jones
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IN TOMORROW'S INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY

'My trade is trivia. This week's top offerings are as follows: it is against the law in the United States to make a pastry reproduction of the White House; a giraffe can use its tongue to wash its ears; red-headed women almost never become bald.'

Top trivia offerings from Captain Moonlight

THE BEST-WRITTEN SUNDAY PAPER IN BRITAIN, FEATURING DAVID THOMSON, JEREMY CLARKE, PETER YORK, CHRIS PATTEN, NATASHA WALTER, JOAN SMITH, GILBERT ADAIR, MICHAEL BYWATER, DEAR ANNIE, ALAN WATKINS AND WALLACE ARNOLD

Kosovo peace talks close to collapse

THE KOSOVO peace conference was close to collapsing last night as the Serbs insisted they would not negotiate unless ethnic Albanian Kosovars signed a contested declaration.

Madeleine Albright, US Secretary of State, announced an emergency mission to Paris today. Her presence in France means there will be a full-scale ministerial meeting of the six world powers in the Contact Group to decide whether to go ahead with a second week of

BY RUPERT CORNWELL

talks. Importantly, Mrs Albright will also deliver a blunt message to the Serbs that unless they relent, they face the certainty of Nato bombing.

At a press conference in Paris yesterday, the Serbian President, Milan Milutinovic, declared flatly there would be no further progress unless the Albanians, like Belgrade, accepted the set of 10 principles forming a basis for the talks and

which they are resisting because they contain no provision for a future referendum on independence for Kosovo, currently a province of Serbia.

Ignoring Western complaints that Belgrade's stalling has reduced the conference to a deadlock, Mr Milutinovic, an ally of the Yugoslav President, Slobodan Milosevic, could not have been more blunt: "If they sign, we will continue the negotiations. If not, no negotiations. We cannot start building

a house from the roof and then reach the foundations and realise it will fall down." He accused the West of impeding the talks, and of bias towards the Albanian position. But there would be no walkout. "Why should we leave? We are sitting, we are waiting. We accept the Contact Group principles."

His words amounted to a direct challenge to Robin Cook, Britain's Foreign Secretary, who placed the blame for the deadlock squarely on the Serb

side, accusing Belgrade of "time wasting" by insisting the Albanians sign up to principles which, he said, both sides had in practice already agreed to by even attending the conference.

The Serbs are desperately keen on formal ratification of the document because it foresees Kosovo remaining part of the existing Yugoslavia, albeit with vastly increased autonomy, including its own police force, elected assembly and president. That, however, is

precisely why the Albanians will not sign it. Yesterday, a key aide of Ibrahim Rugova, their political leader, insisted there had to be a specific provision for a referendum.

With both sides trading blame for the stalemate, omens for success in Rambouillet are looking bleak. Nor are matters helped by latent divisions within the Contact Group - comprising France, Britain, Italy, Germany, the US and Russia - which could explode into the

open if the conference does break down.

While Washington is adamant there must be air strikes against Belgrade if its obduracy blocks any deal, the Russians are equally adamantly opposed. Hubert Vedrine, the French Foreign Minister, has also expressed his country's misgivings about any unilateral use of force by Nato.

The stand-off over principles has meant that the mediators at Rambouillet, led by the US

diplomat Christopher Hill, have hardly embarked on detailed bargaining over Kosovo's autonomy. During her meetings with the two sides, Mrs Albright will also spell out to Serbs and Albanians the key annexes to the proposed accord, calling for a drastic reduction in Yugoslav troop strength in Kosovo. This will reportedly fall from about 14,000 today to only 1,500, with the sole task of guarding the province's external borders.



Some of the tanks that are off to Kosovo Sgt B Gamble

An army at home on the range

THE EBULLIENT, moustachioed sergeant was looking for volunteers. "Come on lads, I still need some bodies for the boat crew. Don't any of you want a nice trip?" he said, brandishing his clipboard.

In the sub-zero temperatures, most of the soldiers taking a break in the "brew" tent seemed more interested in huddling round the warm tea urn as the heavy guns boomed outside. The fact that the sergeant was asking for men to accompany the regiment's tanks on a possible sea-trip to Kosovo showed just how far the plans for deployment had already gone. This was the second earlier this week as The King's Royal Hussars (KRH), were going through live firing training on the Hohnle range in northern Germany, in expect-

BY JOHN DAVISON
Defence Correspondent

tation of a sudden departure. After an announcement by George Robertson, the Secretary of State for Defence, on Thursday the tanks of KRH and the "heavy metal" equipment of the other lead units in the army's 4 Brigade will embark for the troubled Serbian province on Monday.

The decision will ensure that the Challenger tanks, Warrior armoured fighting vehicles, and AS90 155mm guns are in the area when peace talks come to an end next week. A total of 8,000 British troops will be deployed only if a deal is agreed. The move is also being seen as a way of applying extra pressure for a settlement between the Serb and Kosovo-



Sgt Mark Orr in a Challenger tank at the Hohnle training range in Germany. If British troops are sent to Kosovo it will, he says, 'be nobody's idea of fun' Sgt B Gamble

Albanian delegations at the talks near Paris.

Those negotiators should have been at the range last week when the Challengers started to fire. Hearing, seeing and feeling the power from their 120mm guns is an experience to concentrate even the most wayward minds.

The commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Jonathan Powe, was exuding a quiet confidence about the possible job that lies ahead. "We saw it coming, and had been thinking about it amongst ourselves for a while," he said. "The boys are pretty excited about it. They see

it as an important task and are confident in their ability [to do] whatever is asked of them."

Even to get to the training ranges, however, had taken a huge effort. The regiment, and other elements of the British lead battle group, which will spearhead the planned Nato deployment of up to 30,000 troops, had received orders to get ready only six days before.

The latest Mark III tanks had to be scrounged from other KRH squadrons to make sure that those which are going were the best available. Extra spares had to be ordered up, while work on the tanks, which

spend most of their time idle in hangars, went on day and night throughout last weekend.

Some of the problems give a good indication of how the Army is already struggling to meet its many commitments. The range time had to be "borrowed" from the German army, as cost constraints mean tanks usually fire live ammunition only once a year. Training that would normally take eight days has been crammed into two.

Most startling is the fact that of the 12 tank crews in A Squadron, which will be the first to go, half of the gunners will have never fired a real gun

before. Recruitment problems and a high turnover of soldiers to fill other jobs meant that the new boys had previously trained only on simulators.

Staff Sergeant Mark Orr, a regimental gunnery sergeant, is the man directly responsible for making sure all the gunners can shoot straight. He conceded that the situation was far from ideal. "In the old days this certainly wasn't normal, but it is becoming normal now," he said, adding that the experience of the tank commanders would make up for any minor shortcomings. He has 21 years' experience in tanks, including

service in the Gulf War. Sgt Orr said that finally getting the order to move had been a relief for the men, even though it meant working hard to catch up, and that the mood as a whole was "pretty good".

"Sure, spending six to eight months on a mountainside freezing your nuts off isn't anybody's idea of fun, and the separation from families will be painful," he said. "But most realise that this is a real job that has to be done, that is what they joined the Army for and that is what we get paid for. This is where the taxpayer gets his money back."

Back on the range, Major Richard Hannay, the A Squadron leader, watched as three guns went off in rapid succession and tracer lights from the training shells streaked towards the shared, moving target. In the middle distance dark earth spurted up against the snow, recording the hits or near misses.

Major Hannay said he was pleased at the way things were going but, talking about the probable role in Kosovo, he added: "I hope we won't be doing anything like this. If we are then something will have gone terribly wrong."

IN BRIEF

Kray jail appeal rejected

CHARLIE KRAY, elder brother of the gangster twins Ronnie and Reggie, had his 12-year jail sentence for masterminding a £39m cocaine deal upheld by the Court of Appeal yesterday. Kray, 72, of Sanderstead, south-east London, was sentenced in June 1997 after being found guilty of supplying and offering to supply the drug.

Honeymoon air rage groom jailed

A NEWLYWED man who attacked crew on a flight to Gatwick from his honeymoon in Florida was jailed for 12 months yesterday by Chichester Crown Court. Gurdeep Sangha, 23, from Sutton Coldfield, had to be tied down on the 1997 flight after his wife said she was leaving him for another man. He admitted endangering aircraft safety.

Substance abuse killed Lord Bristol

ORGAN FAILURE from long-term use of drugs and alcohol caused the death of the Marquess of Bristol, a coroner ruled yesterday. Lord Bristol, a registered drug addict who had served two jail terms for possession of drugs, died on 10 January at the age of 44.

Keep that aspidochelone talking

MORE THAN seven million Britons talk to their plants, according to the results of a poll conducted by Baby Bio plant food. Sixteen per cent of respondents said they hummed, sang or talked to their houseplants.

Acas fails to stop Tube strike

HOPES THAT next week's 48-hour strike on the London Underground might be called off were dashed yesterday when the conciliation service Acas said it could not find common ground between management and the RMT union.

Moderate miners vote for strike

MEMBERS OF the moderate Union of Democratic Mineworkers have voted to take their first strike, at RJB Mining, over pay, the union announced yesterday.

Match-fixing: three in court

BY ANDREW WOODCOCK

THREE MEN appeared in court yesterday charged with conspiracy and criminal damage in connection with an alleged attempt to fix the result of a Premiership football match by sabotaging the floodlights.

Chee Kow Ong, 49, a manager from Paddington, west London; Wai Yuen Liu, 37, a car salesman from Kensington, west London; and Eng Hwa Lim, 35, an electronic engineer, also from Paddington, were all remanded in custody until 19 February at Horseferry Road magistrates' court. The men were arrested by

officers from Scotland Yard's Organised Crime Squad near Charlton Athletic's ground in south-east London three days ago.

Mr Ong and Mr Lim, both Malaysian nationals, and Mr Liu, from Hong Kong, said nothing during the 20-minute hearing, but listened to proceedings with the help of translation by an interpreter. It was alleged that each of the men conspired with each other and with other people "to obtain for yourself or others a pecuniary advantage, namely

by deception to deny persons the opportunity to win money by betting in that you were able to determine the outcome of a match".

The second charge alleged that the three men "had electrical devices and other various electrical items intending, without lawful excuse to use the same or to cause or permit another to use the same to destroy or damage the electrical supply, concourse and safety lighting belonging to Charlton Athletic Football Club in a way which you knew was likely to endanger human life".

Thumbsucking for dummies

SUCKING a dummy may be better for children than sucking a thumb, according to a leading dentist.

Dummies promote a greater flow of saliva than thumbs or fingers, which helps to prevent tooth decay (provided they are not dipped in juice or honey), and are less likely to cause deformity because children tend to give up dummies sooner, before the development of the adult teeth. Thumb-sucking

BY JEREMY LAURANCE
Health Editor

tends to persist beyond when the adult teeth have started to develop, and can lead to buck teeth (protruding incisors), or other problems depending on which finger is sucked.

Dr Rommie Levine, scientific adviser to the Health Education Authority, says the sucking of dummies is far more common than thumb-sucking in

babies but declines rapidly with age and is rare over the age of three. Thumb or finger-sucking is less common in babies but more common after 18 months and more persistent than dummy-sucking. Four out of ten thumb-suckers still do it at the age of nine.

Writing in today's edition of the *British Dental Journal*, Dr Levine says 95 per cent of children indulge in what scientists call non-nutritive sucking.

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Hall and Stoppard unveil rival to Arts Council



Sir Peter Hall (left) with his lifetime achievement award and Trevor Nunn, the director of the National Theatre.

SOME OF Britain's best-known theatrical figures have set up a rival arts council to monitor and draw attention to the Government's treatment of the arts.

Sir Peter Hall revealed the existence of the body yesterday at the Laurence Olivier Awards, where he was receiving a special award for his lifetime contribution to theatre.

He said he would be chairing the council, which was set up this week. The playwrights Sir Tom Stoppard and Harold Pinter will be on it, as will Sir Harrison Birtwistle, the composer. Sir Peter said the body would feed the press with information and would be a place for arts lovers among the public to make known their dissatisfaction with the Government and the funding bodies.

The awards are one of the high points of the theatrical calendar and yesterday's ceremony at the National's Olivier Theatre in London was attended by the Hollywood star Kevin Spacey, who won the Best Actor Award for his role in *The Usual Suspects*. The

By DAVID LISTER
Arts News Editor

play also won Best Director for Howard Davies.

But Sir Peter stole the show with a stinging attack on the Government, much to the discomfort of Chris Smith, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, who sat smiling in the audience.

Sir Peter said: "There is a passionate, passionate group of people who are worried about the state of the arts. They are artists and they are saying what has happened to the Arts Council? At the moment the Government announces new money but at the other end it is not there. That means the new money has been spent on management consultants and feasibility studies. I still don't think the Government understands the importance of the arts."

"We are desperately apathetic and stupid about our greatest resources, and one of them is the arts."

Sir Peter has had his request to the Arts Council



Spacey: 'Overwhelmed' at being best actor

Council that is in the process of halving the number of staff. So it cannot be called over-bureaucratic."

The Best Actress went to Eileen Atkins for her performance in *The Unrepentant Man*. The National Theatre's production of *Oklahoma!* picked up four awards - Best Musical, Best Supporting Performance in a Musical for Shuler Hensley, Best Choreographer for Susan Stroman and Best Set Designer for Anthony Ward.

Best New Comedy was Terry Johnson's *Cleo, Campione, Emmanuelle and Dick*. Brendan Coyle won Best Supporting Performance for *The Weir* and Sophie Thompson was Best Actress in a Musical for *Into the Woods*. Kat and the Kings was Best New Musical.

Kevin Spacey said he was overwhelmed to receive his award from Lady Olivier, the actress Joan Plowright. Lady Olivier sparked laughter when, referring to her late husband, she said: "If I can put a new spin on an old phrase, I'm as happy as Larry to be here."

£20 note changes to beat forgers

THE BANK of England is to issue new £20 notes because counterfeiters are flooding the market with fake currency.

The new notes - on which the figure of Michael Faraday will be replaced by Edward Elgar - are due to be available from May. A range of extra security features will be included in the huge operation, which will result in the replacement of notes worth £10bn. They will also bear a special security motif for people to check whether they have a forgery.

The extent of the counterfeiting problem was illustrated by a recent police operation against a gang of forgers who were caught preparing to print high-quality £20 notes with a face value of more than £2m on an industrial estate in Kent. The counterfeiters, who are understood to have been bankrolled by the notorious London criminal outfit, the Adams family, had successfully carried out a test run and distributed £100,000 of notes throughout the country. Detectives say that the £20 note is most frequently forged because the smaller denominations are not worth enough, while the £50 note attracts too much scrutiny. Forgers can use computer technology and advanced printing techniques to produce increasingly good copies of banknotes. Of the 1.361 million notes printed last year, 349 million were £20. They now make up nearly half of the £24bn of notes in circulation. The Bank of England estimates that the total value of forged notes is less than £240m. Police seized £6.1m of counterfeit notes last year.

The new £20 will be the most counterfeit-proof note the Bank has produced. The face of Elgar will be on the back, alongside

BY JASON BENNETTO
Crime Correspondent

an illustration of Worcester Cathedral, the city where the composer was born. The new note is expected to replace the old one completely by the end of 2002. The police have carried out a series of operations against major counterfeiting gangs in the past year. One of the top-level outfits is due to be sentenced on Monday.

In a joint operation by the National Crime Squad and the National Criminal Intelligence Service, five men were caught running an illegal money printing factory in Kent.

During Operation Rotary police recovered printing and computer equipment, and enough ink and paper to make counterfeit £20 notes worth £2.1m. The gang had already produced and distributed £100,000 worth, while a further £30,000 was waiting for collection. Police described the counterfeit notes as being very high quality and the forgers as "top of the line".

Each member of the team was chosen for his special skills. Simon Williams, 40, was a printer and was jailed for three years yesterday. Frederick Churchill, 61, who was jailed for 30 months, helped Williams and provided some of the forgery equipment. Mark Field, 37, who has yet to be sentenced, was a computer expert who helped to design and copy the notes. Robert St John, 37, supplied the paper used for the notes and was jailed for 18 months, and Jeffrey Sullivan, 59, who received a three-year prison sentence, was the contact with the underworld.

Leading article, Review, page 3

Woman 'slave' wins £78,000 damages

A YOUNG woman who fell three floors trying to escape from a London flat where she was kept as a domestic slave by a wealthy Kuwaiti family has been awarded £77,988 damages.

Mr Justice Morland, at the High Court in London on Thursday, said Sunethra Jayasekera, 33, was treated in a "humiliating and quite disgraceful manner" by Jaafar and Khaleed al-Sayegh. "I've heard a story which would seem almost incredible to have occurred in London in the Nineties... She

was treated as a domestic slave," he said.

Mrs Jayasekera's dawn escape in 1991 from a ninth-floor flat came after 37 days of working without time off, any pay, or a chance to go out. She was fed on leftovers, made to sleep on the floor, repeatedly kicked and threatened with hanging.

Mrs Jayasekera, who came from Sri Lanka for a supervisor's job with Mr Sayegh, severely damaged her ankle in the fall. She also suffers post-traumatic stress disorder.

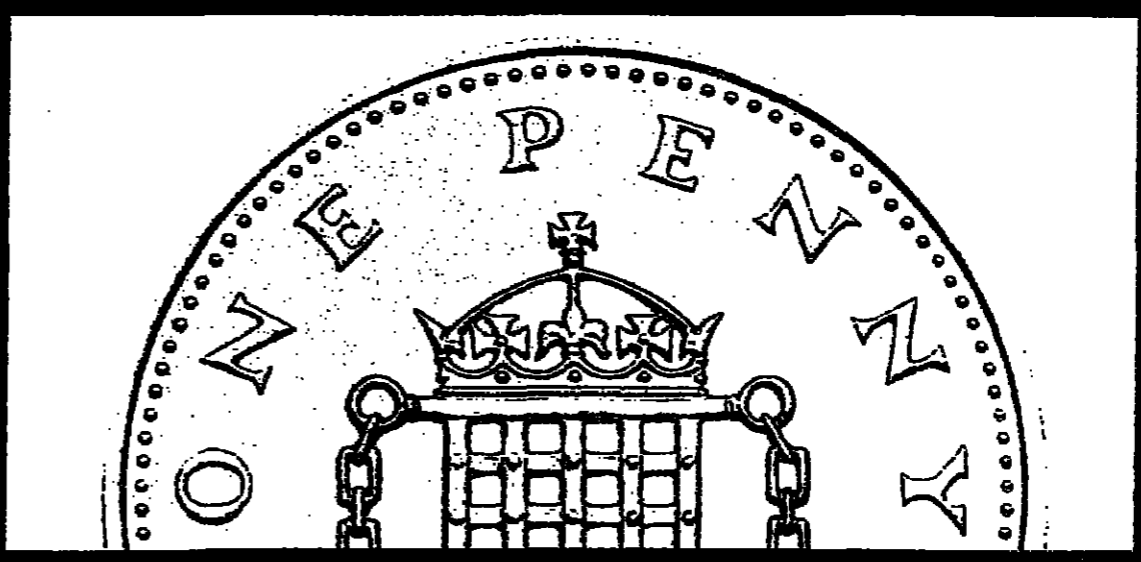
SUE ARNOLD



Even the sheep turned nasty, demanding free champagne

IN THE WEEKEND REVIEW PAGE 5

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Nick Ryman, Hugh's father, and Château Jaubertie, which is for sale Patrick Eagar

Ryman, king of wine, goes bottoms up

THE GOLDEN boy of Britain's wine industry is being forced to sell the £2m château where he grew up to fend off a growing list of creditors who are threatening the future of his business.

Hugh Ryman, the son of the stationery chain millionaire Nick Ryman, is widely acknowledged as having transformed wine-making worldwide with a team of young Australian winemakers using the latest technological expertise in vineyards from France to South Africa. But the man who supplies more than two million bottles a year to British supermarkets and off-licences admitted yesterday that financial mismanagement has left him with serious debts.

He must sell Château Jaubertie, in the Bergerac area of south-west France, to pay creditors. He said he had a buyer and a sale could be completed within weeks, although

BY LOUISE JURY AND MARTIN ISAAC

the château has already been on the market for two years.

But the sale means the end of a dream begun by Hugh's father of beating the French at their own game of producing award-winning wines at the 16th-century château. Nick Ryman bought the château after the Ryman chain was sold to the Burton group in 1972 for £8m. He sold it to a consortium, including his son, in 1994.

Hugh Ryman has become one of the best-known names in Britain's wine industry because of the way he has helped to revolutionise the quality of everyday drinking wine. But documents seen by *The Independent* suggest a catalogue of debts going back several years.

A number of winemakers say they have not been paid for work carried out as long ago as



Hugh Ryman is selling his £2m château to pay off a catalogue of debts

1996, while both his former public relations company, R and R Teamwork, and transport company, Torchrise, parted company from him amid financial wrangles.

Some bond-holders who invested in Château Jaubertie when Nick Ryman began the family's winery in the early Seventies now fear they will never see their stake money again. Sue Whitley, a publisher and bond-holder since she invested £1,500 15 years ago, said: "One gets increasingly nervous that one isn't going to get one's stake money back."

Neither have the bond-holders, who number more than 300, yet received their annual consignment of wine each was due to arrive next Monday but will now not be available until March. Last year's consignment was impounded by Customs and Excise in a dispute over duty and bond-holders only received their cases if they paid to have the wine released. Mrs Whitley said that over the years she had received her money's worth in wine. But more recent bond-holders, encouraged to join by early enthusiasts like herself, had paid a bigger stake and still not received their supplies.

Winemakers, too, have suffered. Josephine Horn, 25, worked for Mr Ryman in France for three months two years ago. After continual problems over pay, she took Mr Ryman to court in Bordeaux

last October and won judgment against him. She said this week, from her new job in Australia, that she had not received the outstanding money - more than £3,000 - and she owed significant sums to lawyers in fees.

Another winemaker, Paul Dunnewy, claims he is owed two and a half months' wages and his travel expenses for working in Moldova in 1996, a sum of about £5,000.

"Under no circumstances would I work for Hugh Ryman again, nor would I recommend the experience to other winemakers," he said.

These debts were unknown to many in the trade until the end of last year when the wine writer Jim Budd circulated details to supermarkets and off-licences. One senior wine buyer for a supermarket chain said it had raised the matter with Mr Ryman. "I would give him at least a year before we consider what we were going to do, but we don't really want to deal with people who don't pay their workers. He's not getting rich. He's trying to keep the balls in the air so that in the end everybody is all right."

Representatives of First Quench, the company that owns wine shops including Threshers, Victoria Wine and Bottoms Up, have also held talks with Mr Ryman.

The problems are understood to have increasingly alarmed Nick Ryman, who resigned from the Worshipful Company of Stationers and Newspaper Makers after months of delays in settling the bill for a wine-tasting hosted by his son in the livery company hall in June 1996.

Hugh Ryman, 37, said yesterday: "We do have debts," but denied owing all the money claimed. There had been poor financial administration in the

Cephas

STAR OF 'THE FLYING WINEMAKERS'

SILHOUETTED AGAINST a dark background with a wine glass to his nose, Hugh Ryman features in the *Oxford Wine Companion* as "one of the more celebrated flying winemakers".

Tall, charming, on the face of it the perfect English gentleman, Ryman has always stood out from the crowd of mostly Australians and New Zealanders who descend on Europe's vineyards to make wine at harvest time.

With a nose for sniffing out under-achieving regions and using the technical skills of antipodean winemakers, Ryman has built a worldwide winemaking business based

on good value wines tailored-made to supermarkets and off-licences.

I first came across him breezing into Moldova in 1991, where he signed up the finest winery as a partner producing cheap but not particularly cheerful reds and whites for the British

market. At that time, he was already starting to make a name for himself with a palatable if unpronounceable £3.49 Hungarian Chardonnay from Gyongyos.

Despite the flying winemaker tag, Ryman is grounded for much of the time. In 1990 he bought

land at Cave du Casse, near Carcassonne, in the south of France and turned the shed into a modern winery complete with glistening stainless steel tank farm and new oak barrels.

"The Dump" as it was affectionately known, turns out crisply refreshing

Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay as well as an attractive Cabernet Sauvignon. Ryman has made no secret of the fact that, to keep the price down, the Chardonnay was fermented using oak chips, a classic Australian technique frowned upon by the French.

With the 1995 vintage in the Languedoc, Ryman branched out into more adventurous styles, making not only good quality Chardonnay but an attractive Roussanne and Viognier and a red made from ancient, local Carignan vines.

He set up projects in Spain, and at Marques at Riscal in Rueda, he used his expertise with Sauvignon Blanc to good effect.

"Possibly the best wine I have ever made," he says of the 1995 Jacana Pinotage Reserve produced in South Africa, which won a trophy and gold medal at the 1997 International Wine Challenge.

ANTHONY ROSE

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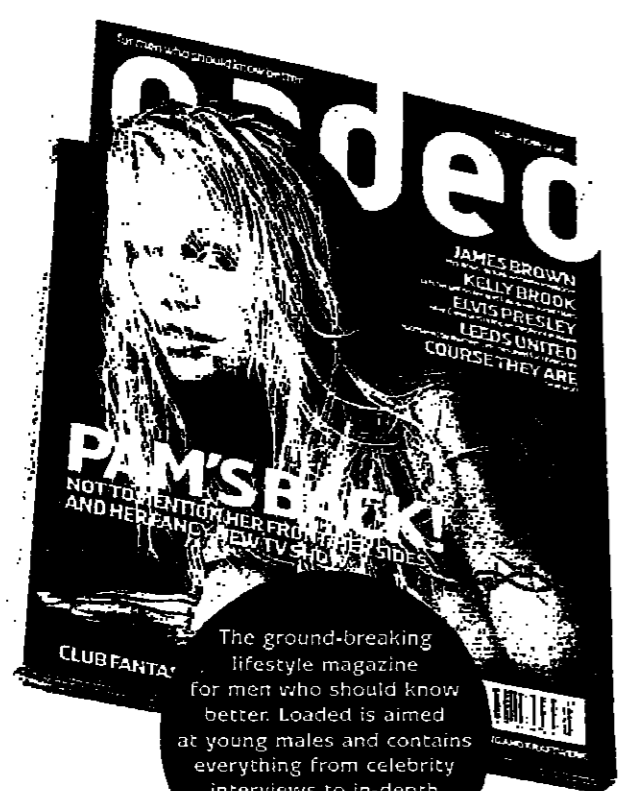
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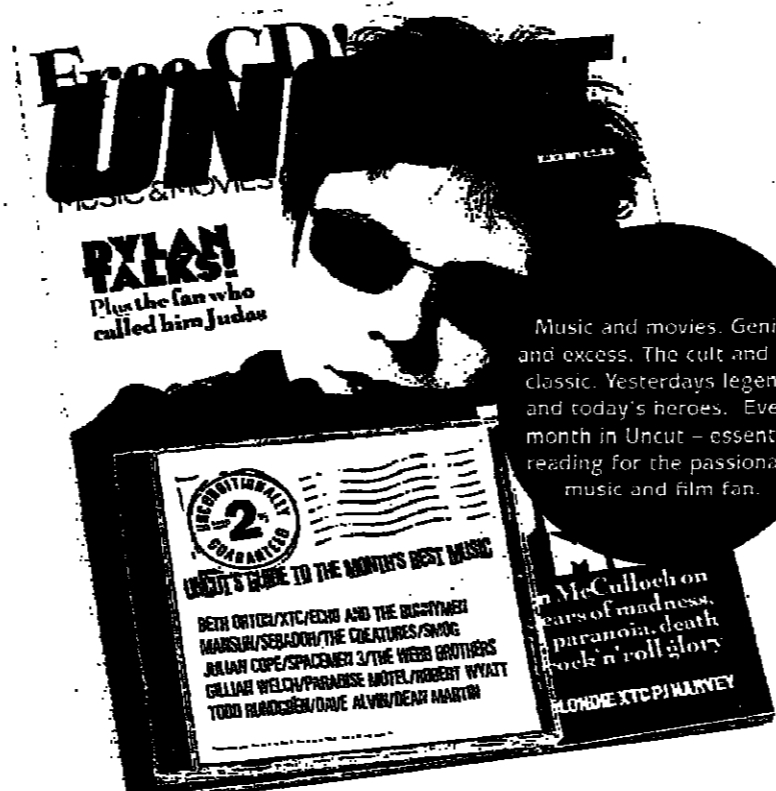
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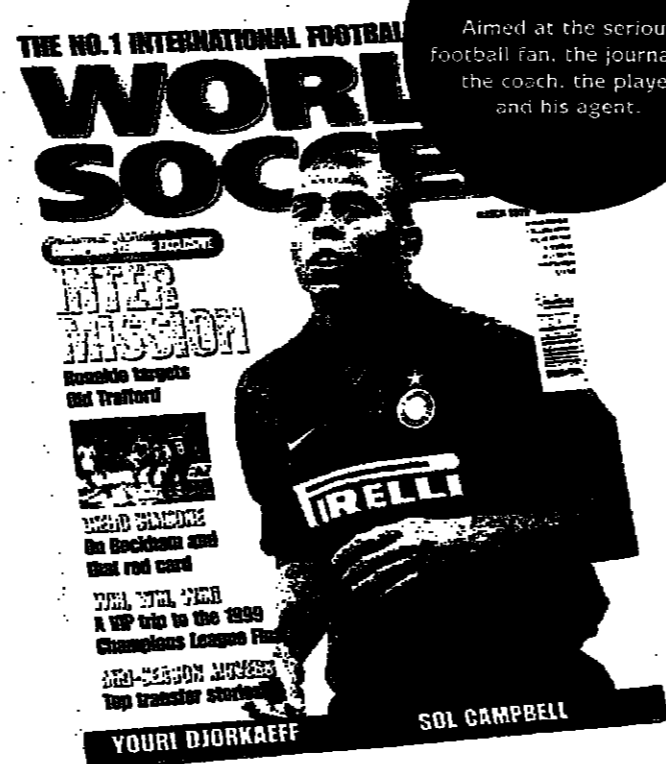
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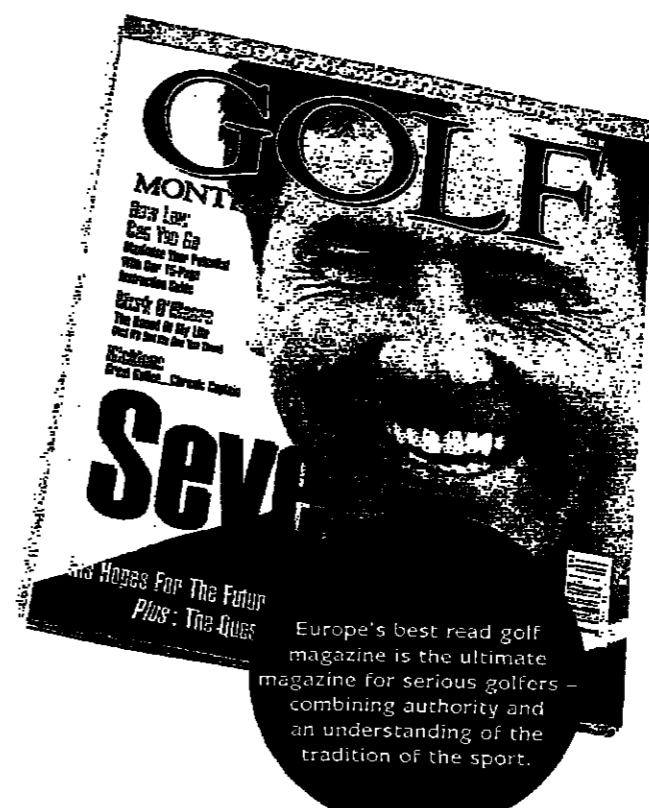
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THE INDEPENDENT

Deadly legacy of Hiroshima in US

BY ANDREW GUMBEL
in Los Angeles

TRISHA PRITIKIN grew up in the shadow of the Hanford Nuclear Reservation, the weapons plant in the wilderness of eastern Washington state that produced the plutonium for the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs under conditions of the utmost secrecy.

Three years ago Ms Pritikin's father, a former nuclear engineer at the plant, died of thyroid cancer. Her mother has just been diagnosed with the same disease. She herself suffers from hypothyroidism, a hormone deficiency that leads to sluggishness, weight gain and deterioration of the skin.

None of the so-called "Hanford downwinders", who have lived in the immediate vicinity of the nuclear reservation and suffered through long years of secrecy surrounding the true nature of its purpose, are in any doubt that the release of radioactive materials has ravaged the health of the local population, poisoned the air and the soil, infected the local livestock and contaminated the nearby Columbia river.

So when preliminary results of a long-awaited federal health survey were released at the beginning of the month, they caused widespread consternation and disbelief.

The study, commissioned by the federal Center for Disease Controls and Prevention, came to the astonishing conclusion that there was no link between increased exposure to radioactive iodine, one of the main contaminants released by the plant, and increased incidence of thyroid-related illness.

The researchers, from the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle, claim to have uncovered "rather strong evidence that exposure at these levels... does not increase the risk of thyroid disease. These results should consequently provide a substantial degree of reassurance to the population exposed to Hanford radiation that the exposures are not likely to have affected their thyroid or parathyroid health," they write.

The downwinders, however, feel far from reassured. "It's clearly ridiculous," Ms Pritikin said. "We think there is a problem with the statistical power of the study. But most of all this does a complete disservice to people... who have seen families members fall ill and die."

Judith Jurj, president of the 3,000-strong Hanford Downwinders Coalition, who grew up near the plant, concurred. "In my family six out of 10 have destroyed thyroid glands, with no history of the disease. It's just clear as a bell," she said.

The Fred Hutchinson Center spent 10 years and \$18m on its study. The researchers do not deny the unusually high incidence of thyroid disease in the Hanford region; rather they miraculously conclude that the nuclear plant and its toxic



emissions are not responsible for it.

According to Tim Connor, an environmental researcher who has spent the past two weeks turning the study inside out in an attempt to undermine it, the problem stems from a faulty line of inquiry. The Fred Hutchinson team did not look at thyroid disease incidence as a whole, but rather asked whether increased exposure to radioactive iodine-131 (I-131) led to increased risk of disease.

Since it was impossible to gauge the exposure of individuals with accuracy, Mr Connor argues, the survey result is just "statistical wizardry".

"They purposely held this study up as sound evidence that not only is Hanford somehow blameless for the thyroid disease that affects Hanford downwinders, they also clearly suggested that the results were superior to previous research indicating a connection between I-131 and thyroid disease," Mr Connor said.

The danger now is that a federal monitoring programme designed to track and contain the devastating health effects of emissions from the nuclear plant will be dropped.

The whole affair is the latest in a long series of shocking discoveries for the downwinders. For four decades, since the plant opened in 1944, the official line was that Hanford was well-controlled and harmless.

In 1986, the Department of Energy at last released documents that not only stated for the first time that dangerous nuclear materials had been produced at Hanford, but that billions of gallons of radioactive liquids and billions of cubic metres of radioactive gases had been released into the surrounding area.

Between 1944 and 1980, more than 740,000 curies of I-131 were released (about one tenth of that released at Chernobyl in 1986), contaminating wide areas of Washington state, Oregon, Idaho, Montana and into Canada. Some of the releases were accidental or caused by poor safety standards. Others, however, were deliberate - either as experiments designed to speed up the cooling process in plutonium production, or as tests to check whether the intelligence services were alert enough to detect the emissions.

About two million people have been exposed to radioactive iodine, which is absorbed by the human body through the thyroid gland and can cause



A bomb of the Fat Boy type dropped on Hiroshima

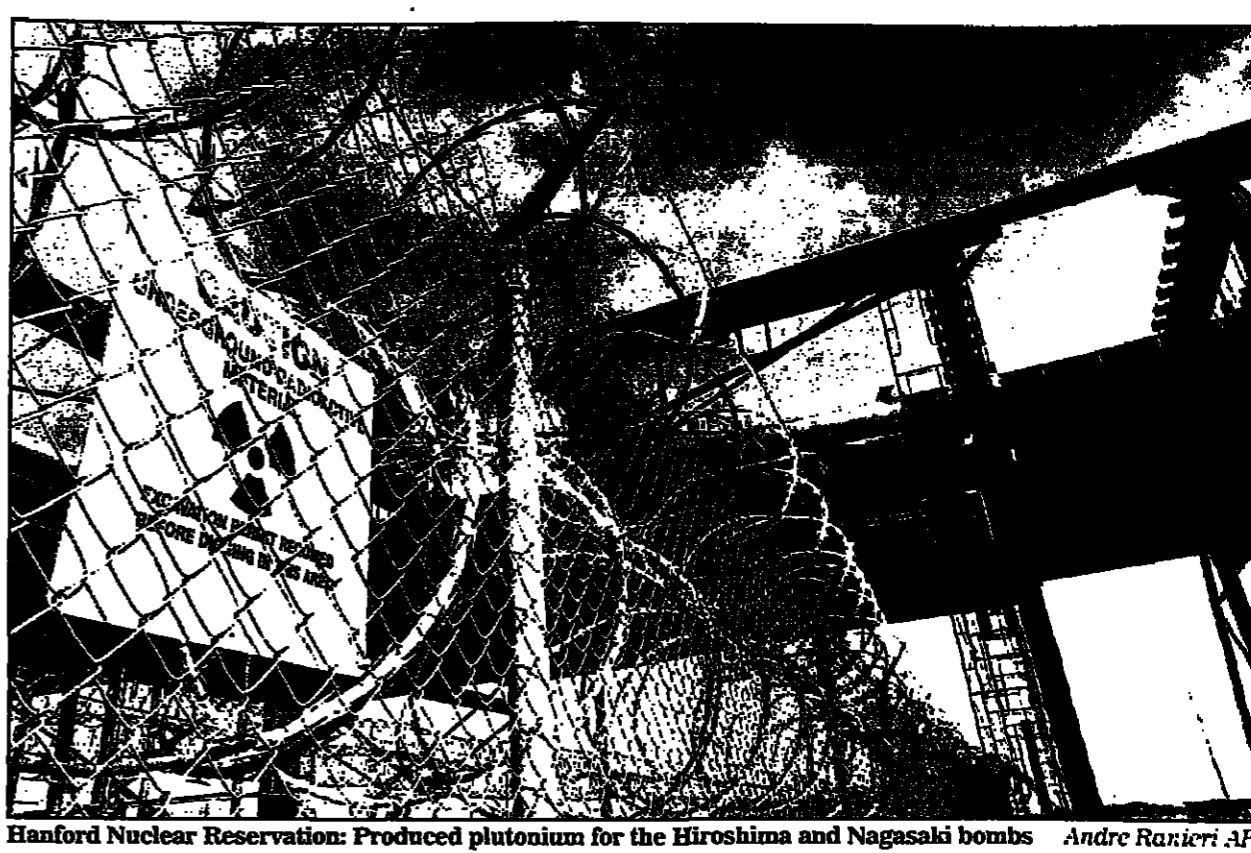
hormone deficiencies and cancer. For years before the truth began to emerge, local medical professionals noticed a worrying increase in thyroid-related disorders. People with skin conditions caused by thyroid problems were said to be wearing "Hanford necklaces".

The radioactive iodine entered the food chain and spread far beyond the area because local cows and goats used for commercial milk production ate contaminated grass.

In some ways, the Hanford controversy marks an advance in American efforts to come to terms with the darker side of its

Cold War legacy. A National Cancer Institute study into health problems arising from nuclear testing in the Nevada desert was kept secret for 14 years before it was released.

Nobody doubts the integrity or the motives of the Fred Hutchinson researchers. But what downwinders bemoan is the apparent insensitivity to the feelings of their subjects. "We've lived with this all our lives," said Tricia Pritikin. "My father is dead and my mother is terminally ill. It would be nice to feel the federal government was fully behind us in our efforts to come to terms with it all."



Hanford Nuclear Reservation: Produced plutonium for the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs Andre Ranieri AP

Gun makers lose landmark damages case

THE GUN industry was humbling down yesterday after a federal jury in Brooklyn awarded damages of \$4m (£2.5m) in a lawsuit against manufacturers by families of six murder victims in New York as well as a 19-year-old man who survived being shot in the head.

The verdict, which none the less exonerated 10 of the 25 gun makers cited in the suit, may be a turning point in the effort by anti-gun activists to challenge the industry. It echoes the campaign by the anti-tobacco movement against the cigarette industry in the United States.

At the heart of the Brooklyn case was the plaintiffs' contention that the gun makers were negligent in overseeing the distribution of guns in the US market. They accused the companies of flooding those states in the US, particularly in the Deep South, with their products in the knowledge that they would then seep into states with tough gun-sale restrictions, such as New York.

"The huge pool of handguns is like toxic waste," a lawyer for the plaintiffs told the jury. "It's been sent down the river by different companies."

In recent months, several US cities, including Chicago, New Orleans, Bridgeport, Connecticut, as well as Dade Coun-

ty in Florida, have launched lawsuits against the gun industry. The suits are modelled on those filed by a multitude of US states against the tobacco industry. The cities want the gun industry to pay for the cost of combating crime involving guns.

The Brooklyn jury concluded that 15 manufacturers distributed their products negligently and that the negligence of nine of them was a "proximate cause" of the shootings.

The only monetary award was tied to the shooting of the surviving man. Steven Fox was accidentally shot by a friend in 1995 and still has a bullet lodged in his head. Although the jury said he and his family suffered \$4m in harm, it awarded him only about \$500,000 (£310,000), based on the market share of the three companies linked to that shooting. They were American Arms Inc, the Beretta USA Corp and Taurus International.

"I thank God we absolutely won," declared Freddie Hamilton, whose son, Njuzi, was felled by a bullet in 1993. She predicted that the verdict would herald a "whole new phase" of litigation against the gun industry.

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The only Joyce scholar in Baghdad

WEEK IN THE LIFE

MOHAMMED DAWEESH, BAGHDAD

MOHAMMED Daweesh should be lecturing young Iraqis on the wonders of English literature. Instead he acts as resident intellectual and translator at the BBC office in Baghdad.

Mohammed has come to realise that working for the foreign media involves hours that few academics would accept. "There's always something to do. My colleagues never seem to sleep," he says with a mischievous grin.

"I live out of town in the small suburb of Dora with my wife, Samira, and our three children. We have a modest house and my wife teaches English in the mornings. At home we are happy but when you look around and see what has happened to this country, you have terrible despair," he said.

The deplorable state of the country's infrastructure, the intermittent electricity, and a new phenomenon, child beggars on the streets, compounds the gloom. "Never in Iraq before have we seen such a thing. Every day there are more in the streets, people with no work and no livelihood. It is a terrible thing. You know, we Iraqis are very proud and this really hurts me," he said.

Wednesday was the most important day for many years for Mohammed. It was not the air duelling between allied and Iraqi warplanes in the south of the country that preoccupied him, nor the meeting of the country's Revolutionary Command Council, but an important interview. It was his viva voce, the oral examination that would decide whether he would be awarded the title Doctor of Philosophy for his unusual thesis. The subject is a semiotic translation of James Joyce's novel *Ulysses*. "I am not really nervous," he claimed before heading off to the examination centre, "but this is six years' work and I hope there will be no problem."

To get to the university would usually involve a long

and potentially hazardous trip in one of the ramshackle taxis that belch out vile fumes in polluted Baghdad. Nothing can be left to chance when it came to this interview, so Mohammed hired a taxi for the whole day and headed off to the university for the three-hour grilling by five professors. The remarkable thing about the academic scene in Baghdad is that it still exists, even if it is only a shadow of its former self.

At the party afterwards to celebrate his successful interview, the new Dr Mohammed Daweesh confided that he had been nervous. "You may think that all the best Iraqis are outside the country. I suppose that is true but they did not make it easy for me. Those professors that stayed behind are no fools, you know. They made it tough for me," he said.

After the excitement of the interview it is back to the humdrum existence of translating news conferences and dealing with the sometimes silly queries and questions of foreign correspondents. But every day, subject to the demands of his employer, Mohammed makes a point of visiting the library of Baghdad University to check on some fact for his research, or just for a quiet place to read. It is a habit that comes from a deep love of literature. "I have to read, and when I read I want to translate it into Arabic so that others can share the richness of English language literature with me," he said.

A short, almost throwaway phrase in *Ulysses* drew Mohammed into the rich and complex world of 20th-century literature. The passage concerns a cat asleep next to some children playing marbles, as the novel's hero, Leopold Bloom, journeys through Dublin. Deciding to avoid the cat, Bloom remarks to himself: "Better not to bother them. Mohammed cut his sleeve in order not to bother one." The



Mohammed Daweesh, BBC translator and student of James Joyce (left, by Jacques Emile Blanche). Dr Daweesh's research is hampered by sanctions against Iraq. National Portrait Gallery/Richard Downes

he was in Trieste, from the Bosnian Muslims," he said.

From the age of 17 the work of Joyce and another Irish writer, Samuel Beckett, has fascinated him. "I started to read Beckett first but quickly realised that Joyce was in many ways the power behind Beckett. So I started reading Joyce. First *Dubliners*, then *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, and finally *Ulysses*. What a novel, what an extraordinary project. I remember the first days reading it. It was very difficult, very complex, but absorbing."

His thesis on translating the novel into Arabic will now be followed by an attempt to translate the entire work.

Mohammed's greatest ambition is to walk the route of Bloom's travel through Dublin on Bloomsday, 16 June. That looks increasingly unlikely as sanctions have isolated even literary scholars such as Mohammed from the international mainstream. Last year he wrote to the British Library lending department in York, requesting copies of the *Joyce Quarterly* journal. As an overseas member with credit coupons bought when he was resident in Britain, he was not prepared for the caustic reply. "They refused, saying they couldn't process my application because of sanctions imposed by the British Gov-

ernment, and they warned me. They said don't send any further requests until sanctions are lifted. It is depressing, upsetting. James Joyce has nothing to do with chemical weapons or biological secrets," he said, the look of bewilderment mixed with genuine hurt visible in his large brown eyes.

"The Western commitment to honouring sanctions has gone too far. It does not differentiate between individual needs and military needs," he said, before packing up his office materials and heading home for the day.

Tucked into his satchel is his latest project, the translation of a long obituary of the poet Ted Hughes. "I have always liked this poet. He is full of strange and powerful insights into nature and the violence that lives just below the surface of our lives," he said, before braving the chilly streets of Baghdad for a taxi to take him home. The article comes from a colleague in London, in defiance of the intellectual embargo. "We've got to keep our minds alive, somehow. I'm sure the author and *The Independent* newspaper will forgive me."

The charming smile speaks volumes for the resilience and resourcefulness of the intellectuals and scholars that have stayed behind and survived in Iraq against enormous odds.

RICHARD DOWNES

White-knuckle control on the old Silk Road

SHE COULD pass for a lollipop lady. She is a small, cheery woman with a winning grin ornamented by a couple of finger widths of gold buck teeth.

She loves a matter, too, although here the good humour fades as she homes in on her theme: the human rights abuses of Uzbekistan, third most populous of the ex-Soviet republics.

If proof were needed that dissidents come in many forms, it could be found in Mukhdabar Akhmedova. She is 60, a devout Muslim, and a brave, angry and alarmingly rare critic of her nation's leadership.

Because of her outspoken views, she has been bugged, followed, harassed and dispatched to prison for six months (for slandering the president). It has not silenced her. She still says the people have been "cheated", but most of them are too scared to say so. And, in her view, the chief villain of the piece is the president, Islam Karimov.

The 23 million people of Uzbekistan are hovering between the old Soviet world, with its knee-jerk repressive and paternalistic impulses, and a new society, a secular nation that can hope, one distant day, to be reasonably free. Now, as Ms Akhmedova points out at

BY PHIL REEVES
in Tashkent

length, the former overwhelmingly prevails.

The media is heavily censored. Only a couple of Russian newspapers are allowed. When *The Independent* discussed posting a copy of the newspaper to two junior government officials, they looked worried and insisted that the package be sent to their superiors.

Uzbeks - mindful that it is a crime to "offend the honour and dignity" of the president - talk carefully with outsiders. It took no more than a three-minute conversation with a woman selling jewellery in a gold market in the 2,500-year-old Silk Road city of Bukhara, before a hefty man in a black leather jacket appeared at my side. The woman spotted him first: "We have a great president," she suddenly told me.

Foreign journalists passing through Uzbekistan's airports are handled by Intourist - the Soviet agency used by the KGB to monitor outsiders. And visiting correspondents are expected to report to the "zhakir" - the local administration - on arrival in a new town.

The man behind this authoritarian system is the 60-



Mukhdabar Akhmedova: Standing up for freedom

year-old Mr Karimov, who made the transition from Communist Party boss to president using skills honed under the Soviet system.

His election after independence in 1991 was widely seen as neither free nor fair. He has since shored up power by extending his office to 2000 in a suspect 1995 referendum; he controls the judiciary, parliament, and the KGB-style security services, the NSS. The latter have repeatedly caused concern among the international human rights community. "Police and NSS used torture, harassment, illegal searches and wiretaps and arbitrarily detained and arrested

opposition activities on false charges," said a 1997 US State Department report on Uzbekistan.

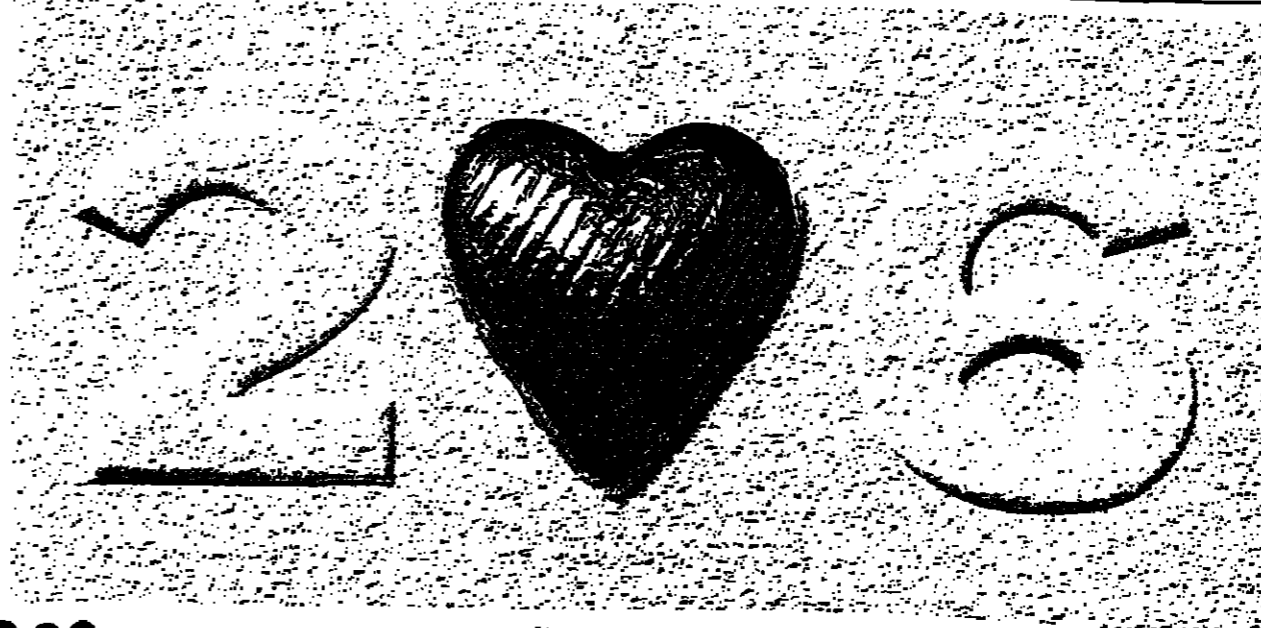
Main opposition parties - such as Erk (Freedom) and Birlik (Unity) - have been shut down; almost all opposition has been driven underground.

The government says it is seeking to build a "secular democratic state", and to widen the institutes of civil government.

Placards bear the president's epigrammatic sayings in the streets and public buildings. His works are taught in schools. In short, Mr Karimov is a man who, as one Western observer put it, exerts "white knuckle control" over his fellow citizens. Is this the real Mr Karimov? His apologists say, no. They cite the mess that Russia is now in after trying to rush through "shock therapy" reforms. Rome, they argue, was not built in a day.

Meanwhile, Ms Akhmedova intends to keep up the pressure. The authorities won't like it, but that does not bother her. "They can't touch me now," she said, cheerily, as we left her tumble-down two-roomed house in the capital, Tashkent. "There would be an international scandal. I am too well known."

Let's hope so.



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SHARE PRICE DATA

of the share price. The price/cashflow (P/C) ratio is the share price divided by cash per share, excluding extraordinary items but including exceptionals. Other details: Ex = Excess; a = Afloat; s = Suspended; p = Partly Paid; np = Not Paid. GIt Prices are Bloomberg General

To access Real-Time Share Prices, 24 hours a day, call 09001 - 201 200.
You will hear the current FTSE 100 Index followed by a Stock Market Summary Report.

For help with the service, including the Portfolio facility, call the Help Desk on 0870-6 070 60, London, ECUA 020 3 2201 1111 or visit www.ecua.com

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BUSINESS

Lloyds poised for merger action as profits hit £3.3bn

BY ANDREW GARFIELD
Financial Editor

LLOYDS-TSB, Britain's biggest high street bank, yesterday signalled its readiness to join in the worldwide wave of banking mergers as it declared a 14 per cent rise in underlying pre-tax profit to £3.29bn last year and made a promise of more growth to come.

Sir Brian Pitman, the bank's chairman, said yesterday that "preconditions for mergers are more auspicious than they were," adding that "for weaker players the confidence of ever upwards profits has been lost".

Operating costs continue to fall sharply, with the group promising further savings on top of the £400m a year pledged at the time of the Lloyds-TSB deal.

The bank, he said, still saw some opportunities for consolidation in the UK, particularly in the mortgage market, although the issue of competition in small business lending meant there was little chance of getting a clearing bank merger through.

However, he would not rule out deals abroad, provided the bank's tough acquisition criteria could be met.

"Some of the cross-border mergers seem to have destroyed value," Sir Brian said. But he pointed out: "There is no doubt that a transformation of the financial services industry is happening all over the world."

"A deal has to strengthen our competitive position, add to our skills and meet our economic test."

Sir Brian's upbeat remarks at the start of the annual reporting season for the banks sparked a sharp rise in share prices across the sector as a whole.

Rival Barclays, still basking in the glow of the warm reception to yesterday's appointment of a new American chief executive, jumped 93p to 1513p. Natwest rose 70p to 1225p, and Lloyds itself rose 67.5p to 852p.

Lloyds shares have been hit repeatedly by fears of big Latin American losses. However, yesterday's figures showed profits in Latin America were up despite lighter



Sir Brian Pitman (left), chairman, and Peter Ellwood, chief executive of Lloyds TSB

Brendan Corry/FT Syndication

economic conditions in Brazil. Analysts say that given the bank's track record on handling acquisitions, and the high rating of its shares, it is

one of the few British banks that could muster shareholder support for a major deal abroad.

Sir Brian said that with re- turn on equity of 33 per cent, and plenty on which potentially to spend, the bank saw no need to contemplate a share buyback.

However, the bank has kept shareholders sweet with a 29 per cent increase in the dividend payout to 22.9p for the year.

Income was up 6 per cent to £7.43bn, despite tougher market conditions. Although statutory profits were down 5 per cent to £3bn reflecting the £400m provision for pensions misselling taken in the first half, there was a strong rebound in second half profits which the bank believes is continuing this year.

Sir Brian said he believed that the threat of recession had been averted and that while bad debts were bound to rise, the pace at which interest rates are falling meant he did not expect a repetition of the early 1990s when widespread corporate collapses and home repossessions drove several of the big banks into loss.

"We do see a slowdown but not rampant recession," he said. "It really is different this time."

Barings shake-up will cut bonuses

ING, the Dutch banking and insurance giant, is transferring control of ING Barings, its investment banking arm, from London to Amsterdam as part of a sweeping internal reorganisation sparked by last autumn's huge emerging market losses, writes Andrew Garfield.

In an internal memo circulated yesterday staff were also warned that discretionary bonuses for the year just gone will be "below in-

tial expectations" while in 1999 bonus payments will be tied more closely to overall performance by the firm.

Chief executive officer David Robins, who joined the bank from UBS, is to reorganise its activities on product lines, in a bid to end the squabbling between the geographical fiefdoms that grew up as a result of a ING's mid-1990s spending spree.

The new ING Barings is, Mr Robins said, to be "pre-

dominantly client focussed." The bank insisted that the reorganisation would not result in any further job losses beyond the 1200 cuts announced in October.

ING Barings has seen a raft of top level departures since the firm's emerging market losses came to light. These include Marius Mindehoub, the previous head of the firm. Since his departure, the global chief operating officer, Peter Bennett,

has quit, followed by Jeremy Palmer, the head of equities.

In their memo to staff, Mr Robins and Michel Tilmant, the main board member responsible for corporate and investment banking within ING, acknowledged there had been "errors in judgement and control failures" in 1998.

The group chairman, Godfried van der Lugt, also dismissed talk that the shake-up could herald the closure or sale of ING Barings.

Toyota snubs Britain as choice for third car factory

THE JAPANESE car manufacturer Toyota is planning to build its third European assembly plant outside Britain but there could be consolation for the UK in the shape of a doubling of production at its Deeside engine plant in North Wales.

Executives from Toyota, the biggest carmaker in Japan and the third biggest in the world, said yesterday that sites in Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic were being examined as potential locations for a new car factory.

Another possibility is to expand Toyota's new plant at Valenciennes in northern France, which will start production of a new small car, the Yaris, in 2001.

Toyota denied that its plans were being influenced by the fact that Britain was outside

the new euro zone, pointing out that production at its Burnaston plant in Derbyshire would rise to 200,000 cars this year.

But Juan José Diaz Ruiz, executive vice-president of sales and marketing for Toyota Motor Europe, said: "Common sense says we like to plan long-term and if there is one currency across Europe it makes it easier for us to plan."

France was selected for Toyota's second car plant because the biggest market for small cars is in southern European countries such as Spain and Italy.

Sites in eastern and central Europe are now being examined for the third plant because those are the regions

where the biggest growth in demand is forecast to take place.

Toyota plans to equip all the cars it builds in Europe with engines from the Deeside plant. This means that production at Deeside will rise to 200,000 by the end of this year from 108,000 in 1998.

But it will double again to 400,000 a year once the Valenciennes factory is fully operational. This will create about 200 jobs on top of the 3,200 that Toyota already employs at Burnaston and Deeside.

Toyota is also planning to cut the size of its 3,400-strong European dealer network by up to 25 per cent. This would reduce the number of dealerships by around 850.

In the UK Toyota has 240 Toyota dealerships and 55 dealerships selling the upmarket Lexus range.

Following its success in Europe last year, when Toyota's market share exceeded 3 per cent for the first time, the company has set itself the target of becoming one of Europe's five biggest car sellers in the next six years.

Toyota aims to sell 600,000 cars in 1999 and 800,000 in 2005, giving it a 5 per cent market share. This year it is launching five new models and eight new engines in Europe.

Akira Imai, president of marketing and engineering for Toyota Motor Europe, said the company had no plans to merge with BMW or any other Western carmakers, even though Toyota's financial position is strong.

In the six months to the end of last September it made profits of ¥403bn (£2.1bn), on sales of ¥6.2 trillion.

M&S meets City as job fears grow

PETER SALSBUURY, the new Marks & Spencer chief executive, is to meet City analysts next week amid growing speculation that Britain's top retailer is to announce its first job cuts since 1992.

The company yesterday was forced to deny reports that it was poised to axe 800 senior and middle management staff in a bid to slash costs and increase efficiencies.

A spokeswoman said that the stories were "purely speculative" and no decision had been taken over redundancies. She added that even if M&S was to reduce its workforce, "a figure of 800 people is totally beyond the realm of possibilities."

However, she conceded that the blue-chip retailer which was rocked by a shock profit warning last month, could soon announce the results of a wide-ranging review of its business.

BY FRANCESCO GUERRERA

The internal inquiry, which is looking at cutting costs and restructuring M&S operations, is not due to finish until June. However, the spokeswoman suggested that some cost-cutting measures could be implemented before then.

At the time of January's disastrous trading statement, Mr Salsbury said M&S would cut staff through natural wastage and only use redundancies as a last resort.

City analysts said that they were expecting some staff reductions over the next few months. "Job losses would not come as a surprise. It is something we have been expecting for some time," one said.

The spokeswoman claimed that Mr Salsbury's tour of the City was a "meet and greet" exercise to present the new chief executive to top retail analysts.

BRIEFING

BA pays £215m for stake in Iberia

BRITISH AIRWAYS last night confirmed it would pay up to £215m for a 9 per cent stake in Iberia, the Spanish airline, as part of a wide-ranging strategic alliance between the two airlines.

BA and Iberia will co-operate in a range of areas, including code-sharing on flights beyond the UK and Spain, and reciprocal participation in frequent flyer programmes. Iberia has accepted an invitation to join BA's Oneworld global airline alliance. American Airlines also said it was taking a 1 per cent stake in Iberia, which is being privatised by the Spanish government.

Rogers under pressure over Sky



PETER ROGERS (left), the chief executive of the Independent Television Commission, was under increasing pressure to step down last night after the television watchdog appeared to have exceeded its responsibilities by lobbying against British Sky Broadcasting's proposed takeover of Manchester United. In a statement issued last night,

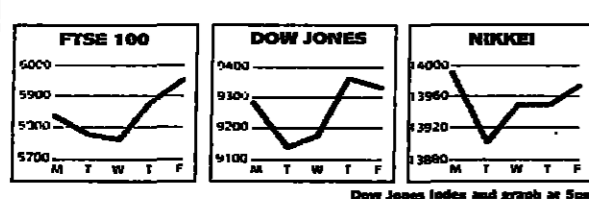
the ITC said it was concerned that the £242m acquisition needed careful investigation, although it stressed that the decision on whether or not to clear the deal was down to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. The statement follows reports that the ITC had told the MMC that the deal should be blocked.

Outlook, page 19

Berisford spurns takeover approach

BERISFORD, the former sugar trader turned kitchen equipment supplier, has rejected an approach that could have led to a bid and the unnamed bidder has now withdrawn its interest. Yesterday's announcement to the stock exchange was made in response to a recent rise in the share price. The shares, which started the week at 177.5p, rose a further 3p to 201.5p yesterday.

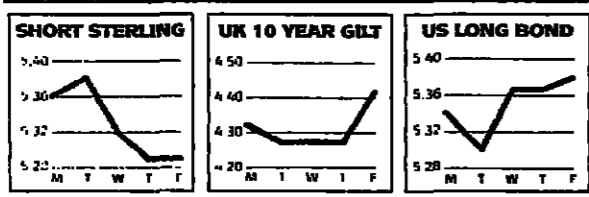
STOCK MARKETS



Dow Jones index and graph at 5pm

Index	Close	Change	52 wk high	52 wk low	Yield (%)
FTSE 100	5950.70	62.20	6195.60	4599.20	2.68
FTSE 250	5187.20	57.00	5270.80	4247.60	3.20
FTSE 350	2828.50	25.10	2969.10	2210.40	2.76
FTSE All Share	2735.41	23.70	2866.52	2143.53	2.81
FTSE SmallCap	2237.00	11.20	2793.80	1834.40	3.62
FTSE Fledgling	1222.80	6.10	1517.10	1046.20	4.43
FTSE AIM	827.00	2.10	1146.90	761.30	1.21
FTSE Europe 100	2730.09	27.04	3079.27	2018.15	2.15
FTSE Europe 300	1182.90	11.20	1332.07	880.63	2.00
Dow Jones	9320.22	-40.16	9647.96	7400.30	1.65
Nikkei	13973.69	21.29	15173.35	12787.90	1.04
Hans Sens	9425.42	278.62	11926.16	6544.79	3.73
Dax	4688.74	49.41	5217.83	3833.71	1.75
S&P 500	1238.52	-15.02	1283.64	923.32	1.28
Nasdaq	2345.28	-59.09	2533.44	1357.09	0.29
Toronto 300	6458.20	-35.31	7837.70	5320.90	1.84
Brazil Bovespa	8951.77	-17.18	12339.14	4378.69	6.82
Belgium Bel20	3389.26	36.06	3713.21	2626.25	2.09
Amsterdam AEX	523.33	5.26	600.65	366.58	1.88
France CAC 40	4060.36	-11.98	4404.94	2881.21	1.99
Milano MIB30	33852.00	447.00	39170.00	24175.00	1.21
Madrid IBSX 35	9739.40	48.90	10989.80	6869.90	1.92
Istanbul Comp	5251.33	172.01	5581.70	3732.57	1.49
S Korea Comp	551.27	27.78	530	651.95	277.37
Australia ASX	2859.50	22.50	2948.70	2386.70	3.18

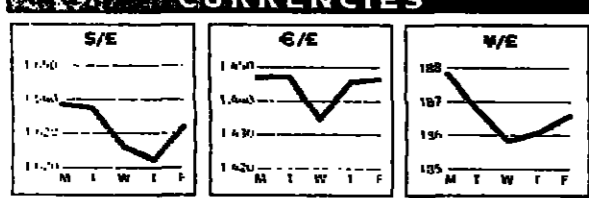
INTEREST RATES



at 5pm. German money market rates equal euro rate

Index	3 months	6 months	1 year	2 year	5 year	10 year	Yr chg	Long bond	Yr chg
UK	5.44	-2.06	5.25	-2.20	4.41	-1.54	4.38	-1.55	
US	5.00	-0.63	5.18	-0.51	5.00	0.51	5.38	0.48	
Japan	0.38	-0.46	0.40	-0.42	2.19	0.21	3.29	0.69	
Germany	3.10	-0.41	3.03	-0.75	3.84	-1.14	4.76	-0.79	

CURRENCIES



from 1/1/99 for euro

	at 5pm	Change	Yr Ago		at 5pm	Change	Yr Ago
Dollar	1.6315	+0.82c	1.6395	Sterling	0.6129	-0.31p	0.6029
Euro	1.4667	+0.93c	1.4679	Yen	0.8862	-24.31c	0.8573
Yen	166.04	+0.47	204.09	Yen	114.38	-0.30	124.68
Index	100.20	+0.30	104.30	Index	105.00	+0.10	107.90

OTHER INDICATORS

	Close	Chg	Yr Ago		Close	Chg	Yr Ago
Event Oil (\$)	10.15	0.47	14.00	GDP (trillion)	3.00	112.04	Mar
Gold (\$)	229.95	2.25	298.60	RPI	164.40	2.80	159.92
Silver (\$)	5.64	0.14	7.00	Base Rates	5.50	7.25	

www.bloomberg.com/uk

SOURCE: BLOOMBERG

TOURIST RATES

Australia (\$)	2.4354	Mexican (nuevo peso)	14.85
Austria (schillings)	19.20	Netherlands (guilders)	3.0738
Belgium (francs)	56.43	New Zealand (\$)	2.8425
Canada (\$)	2.3517	Norway (kroner)	12.07
Cyprus (pounds)	0.8070	Portugal (escudos)	278.48
Denmark (kroner)	10.44	Saudi Arabia (rials)	5.9231
Finland (markka)	8.3662	Singapore (\$)	2.2620
France (francs)	9.1637	South Africa (rand)	9.5028
Germany (marks)	2.7420	Spain (pesetas)	232.08
Greece (drachmas)	450.24	Sweden (kronor)	12.50
Hong Kong (\$)	12.16	Switzerland (francs)	2.2379
Ireland (pounds)	1.0977	Thailand (bahts)	55.09
India (rupees)	61.97	Turkey (liras)	54.1896
Italy (lire)	6.1266	USA (\$)	1.5800
Japan (yen)	181.17		
Malaysia (ringgits)	5.9239		
Malta (lira)	0.6052		

Rates for information purposes only

Source: Thomas Cook

AROUND THE WORLD'S MARKETS

LONDON

A ROLLER-COASTER session ended with Footsie holding a 62.2 points gain at 5,950.7. At one time it was riding 144 points higher but in busy trading the stock market was assailed by doubts and briefly the index fell into negative territory, down 8.3. Supporting shares made headway, particularly the small caps.

Lloyds TSB was the star, gaining 68p to 852.5p on its results and pulling other bank and financial shares higher. BT, on its call boom, rose a further 35p to 1,044.5p, a peak but Colt Telecom fell 61p to 1,072p.

NEW YORK

US STOCKS fell, led by computer stocks, following a series of gloomy analyst predictions. The Dow Jones Industrial Average slipped 15.45 points to 9348.01 in early trade, while the Nasdaq Composite Index fell 45.84 to 2359.71.

Shares in Dell Computer led the fallers after downbeat comments from Daniel Niles, a top-rated analyst at BancBoston Robertson Stephens. Dell dragged other computer stocks lower. "That's where the bubble in the market is," said one trader.

TOKYO

TOKYO'S BENCHMARK share index ended modestly higher, helped by strong gains in the banking sector. The Nikkei finished up 21.99 points, or 0.15 per cent, at 13,973.69.

Banking stocks made sizeable gains amid merger speculation, although a sharp fall in Japanese bond prices later in the day took the some of the shine off the sector - banks are among the major holders of Japanese bonds. Analysts attributed the bond price tumble to position-squaring ahead of a scheduled policy announcement from the Bank of Japan.

SAO PAULO

BRAZILIAN SHARES edged lower yesterday afternoon, with traders keeping a nervous eye on developments on Wall Street. The benchmark Bovespa index was trading down 43.03 points or 0.48 per cent at 8,947.10. Elsewhere, the Rio de Janeiro IBV index was down 473 at 30,619.

The Brazilian real continued to hold its own against the dollar, trading at 1.9, little changed from Thursday. Dealers said trade was thin ahead of the Carnival holiday. One said: "The market is calm, and there's not much happening."

FRANKFURT

GERMAN SHARES gave up strong early gains after a disappointing start on Wall Street. The electronic Xetra Dax closed up around half a percentage point at 4,886.74, having been more than 2 per cent higher earlier in the day. The floor Dax finished 1 per cent higher at 4,888.74.

Deutsche Telekom was the most actively traded stock, ending up more than 5 per cent higher. The gains were triggered by the decision by the German telecoms regulator to raise the price at which Deutsche Telekom is allowed to rent local phone lines to rivals.

Van Miert's radar locks on to BAe

LONDON AND Brussels look like they are on a war footing again, this time over the British Aerospace-Marconi merger. Even though the deal is an all-British affair involving two defence companies, the European Competition Commissioner, Karel Van Miert, has locked onto the target.

Mr Van Miert is a zealous regulator whose no-fly zone seems to get bigger by the day. He has therefore decided that the competition aspects of the deal merit examination in Brussels. In Westminster and Whitehall, meanwhile, the hackles are rising. Defence mergers are supposed to be one of the few areas where Brussels surrenders its powers of investigation to national competition authorities.

In the case of BAe and Marconi, the British government is in a delicate position. Whatever gloss Alastair Campbell may choose to put on it, it is clear that Tony Blair would have preferred to see pan-European consolidation taking place rather than the national champion Sir Dick Evans and Lord Simpson



OUTLOOK

came up with. BAe and Marconi will not, therefore, automatically get an easy ride from regulators here.

But it would be understandable if the UK government weren't a little suspicious of the motives of the European Commission in wishing to examine the deal. The way Brussels colluded in the stitch up which allowed Electricité de France to take over London Electricity showed the Commission at its worst. Brussels cleared the deal in advance and then ignored the legitimate grounds cited by the UK authorities for wanting regulatory authority back.

This time Brussels has alighted on the trivial civil competition concerns raised by the BAe-Marconi merger to justify its interference.

Behind the scenes, it would not be surprising to discover that the big guns of Germany and France have been laying down a blanket of artillery in the direction of Brussels. The BAe-Marconi deal leaves both Daimler Benz Aerospace and Thomson CSF in the cold which is not something the politicians in Bonn or Paris like very much. Even though they may not be able to stop the deal, they can make life uncomfortable for BAe and Marconi.

But the logic says the final arbiter should be London which will probably clear the deal after a little huffing and puffing. The MoD may not like the idea of there being less competition for its custom. But at least it has the Americans to keep BAe-Marconi on its toes. Unlike its continental counterparts, Britain has not always fallen for defence contractors who wrap themselves in the national flag.

The Treasury might, like it even

less if BAe or Marconi jumped into bed with the Europeans since every defence procurement battle would become a foregone conclusion.

Banking mergers

ANOTHER WEEK another banking merger? Well not quite. Yesterday, Sir Brian Pitman once again sent the hares running through the UK banking sector with the carefully phrased remark that "preconditions for banking mergers are more auspicious than they were."

With the market itching for a deal, the remarks have been read as a clear signal that Lloyds, now that the integration of TSB is well in hand, is poised to strike - as Sir Brian, one of the most experienced men in the business, surely knew it would.

The question, as always, is where and when, and as far as that goes, Sir Brian was giving few clues, or at least deliberately contradictory ones.

There have been plenty of merg-

ers in the last 18 months. But so far they have all been abroad, while here all we have had is an endless diet of talk and precious little action.

Is that really about to change? Sir Brian and his team have looked at everything both at home and abroad, and so far seen nothing that they particularly like. What they desperately need to make a merger stack up is for some of the weaker players to shed their illusions and resign themselves to their deserved fate. Given the strength of yesterday's results, there is no doubt that in his mind that in the consolidation game he sees Lloyds as being predator rather than prey.

So far the preoccupation within the UK banking sector has been primarily on its own backyard. But the government seems determined to block any mergers which bolster the position of the banks at the expense of the consumer - in other words, precisely the kind that the City wants to see.

Thursday's appointment of an American to head Barclays raises

the intriguing possibility of a transatlantic banking deal. Sir Brian for all his talk about how cross-border mergers can destroy value is surely not about to be bested by anyone, even a former US marine.

BSkyB/Man Utd

THE INDEPENDENT Television Commission and its chief executive, Peter Rogers, have never been held in particularly high regard by the broadcasting companies they are supposed to regulate. In recent years, however, Britain's television companies have become increasingly frustrated with the industry watchdog. Its bureaucratic approach and insistence on regulating everything that appears on television are seen as being increasingly at odds with the new digital world of wide consumer choice.

Nevertheless, even Mr Rogers' most vehement critics would not have thought the ITC capable of such a spectacular own goal by letting it be known that it had opposed

British Sky Broadcasting's takeover of Manchester United in its submissions to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Of course, as the official regulator the ITC is entitled to its opinion on the subject. Unfortunately, it is not clear that Mr Rogers' view is entirely shared by his officials. In a hurried statement issued yesterday, the ITC argued that although it believed the takeover needed "careful investigation" a decision on the outcome of the enquiry was "a matter for the MMC alone."

It seems that, while the ITC put forward a particular case in its submissions to the MMC, Mr Rogers embellished on those views when the panel asked him to explain them.

Mr Rogers has already crossed BSkyB once when the ITC forced the satellite broadcaster to withdraw from the winning consortium for the licence to operate digital terrestrial television. The odds on him surviving in his job beyond next week - when the ITC's main board meets - must be slim.

AT&T set to sell its 22% stake in Telewest

AT&T, THE US telecoms giant, is thought to be preparing to sell its long-distance telecommunications business in the UK and its shareholding in Telewest, the cable operator, as a condition for the European Commission clearing its \$10bn alliance with British Telecom.

The commission is ready to give its formal approval to the joint venture, in a move that would clear one of the hurdles in BT and AT&T's attempts to achieve regulatory approval for the deal.

The US Department of Justice and the Federal Communications Commission is still investigating the alliance.

The European Commission, which has been investigating the agreement since last October, has concluded that the alliance should be allowed to go ahead provided that AT&T sells some of its assets in the UK.

Karel van Miert, the European competition commissioner, reportedly told an audience in Belgium on Thursday evening that he was ready to clear the deal if the disposals were made.

BY PETER THAL LARSEN

A formal statement is expected in the next few weeks.

The news raises the prospect of AT&T being forced to sell ACC, its subsidiary which sells long-distance telecom services to UK business customers. The company, which employs 400 people, currently has approximately 2 per cent of the UK long-distance market.

AT&T also has a 21.6 per cent stake in Telewest, the UK's second-largest telecom operator, as well as a UK communications business employing 500 people.

AT&T is unlikely to object to the conditions as it does not see the businesses as central to its objectives.

AT&T acquired ACC when it bought Teleport, the US local access operator. Meanwhile, it inherited the Telewest stake as the result of its acquisition of TCI, the US cable and media operator.

According to analysts, ACC would be likely to fetch several hundreds of millions of pounds for AT&T. However, any sale is likely to incur a large tax charge for the US group because of the way in which it accounted for its merger with Teleport.

The stake in Telewest, meanwhile, is currently worth more than £1bn and it is likely to be seen by other players in the cable industry as a possible launch pad for further consolidation.

An AT&T spokesman refused to comment yesterday. "We cannot comment on the status of inquiries in the process of considering the venture," he said.



Van Miert: Says an assets sale condition of alliance

Ecuador abandons fixed exchange rate

DEALERS in the currency markets yesterday claimed their second Latin American scalp of the year, when Ecuador followed the example of Brazil and abandoned defence of its fixed exchange rate.

The Ecuadorian sucre tumbled almost 20 per cent after the central bank said it would stop maintaining fixed trading bands against the dollar.

Speaking at a press conference in Quito, Luis Jacome, head of the central bank, said the authorities would still intervene in the currency markets if the sucre came under speculative attack. According to Mr Jacome, the devaluation will help preserve Ecuador's dwindling foreign currency reserves.

The central bank has spent close to \$200m over the last month attempting to defend the sucre, and also hiked short-term interest rates to more than 100

per cent. The interest rate increases crippled economic growth, and precipitated the closure of several banks.

"What they [were] doing with the exchange rate is suicidal," said Michael Henry, an economist at ING Barings, speaking before the devaluation.

Ecuador's central bank chief argued that the devaluation should allow interest rates to fall, although analysts said that the experience of Brazil - where rates are still high - suggested this may not be the case.

Analysts were also sceptical of Mr Jacome's claim that devaluation would not jeopardise attempts to bring down inflation - running at over 40 per cent.

Yesterday's devaluation follows the resignation on Thursday of Ecuador's finance minister, Fidel Jaramillo.

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Footsie fades despite early boost from banks

BANKS BOLSTERED the stock market. At one time Footsie was riding 144 points higher, with the Lloyds TSB figures inspiring the banking sector and encouraging other blue chips to move ahead.

All that was needed to ensure another high performance session was further progress in New York. But, at least during London hours, the Americans failed to oblige.

Footsie reversed into the red, recording an 8.3 fall, before staging a rally, closing at 5,950.7, up 62.2.

Supporting shares stayed in positive territory with the mid cap index edging forward 0.7 to 5,187.7 and the small cap continuing its recovery run with an 11.2 advance to 2,237.

However, if the bankers had not been in such exhilarating form, progress would have been much more muted. Lloyds kicked off the banking profits season with a much more confident display than at

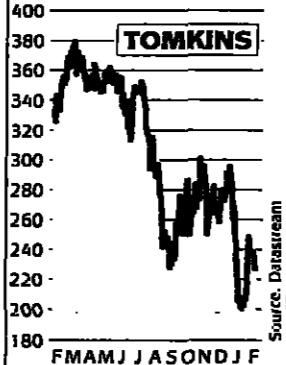
MARKET REPORT



DEREK PAIN

SHARE SPOTLIGHT

share price, pence



Source: Datastream

INTRIGUING DEVELOPMENTS

are rumoured at perennial Irish oil punt, Bula Resources, unchanged at 1.25p. Albert Reynolds, the former Irish premier, is said to be on the verge of becoming chairman. In a further shake-up two other newcomers will join the board with three directors quitting. A cash-raising exercise is also likely and there is talk of oil developments in Libya and Iraq. Bula was last above 2p two years ago.

one time seemed likely. It offered clear hints that the market may not have to wait too long for its next major takeover. The shares, at one time up 83.5p, ended 68p higher at 652.5p.

Barclays, still drawing support from the arrival of new chief executive Michael O'Neill, jumped 96p to 1,516p and Bank of Scotland gained 60.5p to 862.5p.

The banking excitement

spread to other financials with Allied Zurich, 83.5p to 81p, and Legal & General, 46p to 87p, in form.

But elsewhere among the Footsie constituents it was a more subdued end to the day with Colt Telecom leading the retreat with a 61p fall to 1,072p.

Scottish & Newcastle, despite Dresdner Kleinwort Benson support, lost 28.5p to 676p.

BT continued to reflect its call boom, hitting another peak with a 35p gain to 1,044.5p in busy trading. The shares have come up from 326p three years ago.

IT shares managed moderate headway in the wake of New York's overnight surge. Admiral added 70p to 1,355p but Misy, displaying its US operations to analysts next week, fell 22p to 587p.

Tomkins, the so-called buns-to-guns conglomerate, had a shaky time after a land-

mark US court ruling found hand-gun makers liable over shootings in New York. Around 25 makers were prosecuted including Tomkins Smith & Wesson off-shoot.

The ruling will almost certainly encourage more court cases, with the gun makers facing legal expenses as well as potential damages payments. The shares, at one time down 16p, ended 4.75p off at 229.75p, no doubt, by the group's share buy-back programme which embraced another 500,000 at 238.5p.

British American Tobacco, too, was under negative US influence. The astonishing \$51.5m judgement in favour of a cancer sufferer who sued the Philip Morris tobacco giant, stubbed BAT 9.5p to 579p. Gallaher fell 9p to 414.5p and Imperial Tobacco 4.5p to 712p.

General Electric Co, down 26p to 505.5p, was unsettled by indications its Marconi merger with British Aerospace will come up against the regulators of Brussels. BAE, which believes the deal is "entirely a matter" for the British Government, was lowered 14.5p to 425.5p.

BAA, the airports group, was grounded by a large stock overhang. The shares fell 22.5p to 708p.

WPP was one to benefit from an expected profits announcement next week. The advertising group hardened 21.25p to 472p. Around £210m against £177.4m is the likely outcome. Even Rank, the struggling leisure group, perked up ahead of results. It is expected to suffer a £45m fall to £258m. The shares rose 4.25p to 203.25p.

Engineers fell back as takeover excitement faded: Morgan Crucible lost 11.5p to 211p and Vickers 6.5p to 138.5p. Builders remained strong, reflecting the low interest rate. Barratt Developments firmed 5p to 271.5p and Berkeley 23.5p to 588.5p.

Berisford, the kitchen and catering equipment group, ended 7p higher at 205.5p after rejecting a break-up approach.

On-Line, the computer games group, was up to its old tricks, surging 56.5p to 155p. The shares, a notoriously narrow market, started the year at 12.5p, subsequently hitting 273.5p before resting at around 100p. A possible link with Nintendo was responsible for the latest jump. The company said talks were in "an advanced stage" for the right to become the developer for Nintendo.

Profit warnings hit Uthmaniyah Networks 1p to 2.5p and Birse, a construction group, 2p to 8p.

Austin Reed, the menswear retailer which has fallen sharply in the past year, smartened up with a 11.5p gain to 99p. The market was puzzled by some small but persistent buying orders. Last year the shares touched 215p.

Desire Petroleum, riding at 445p last year on hopes of Falkland Islands oil, fell 1.5p to 16.5p, a low.

CCI, THE old clay pigeon business suspended at 125p, is planning to return to market as a computer group. It is taking over software and hardware distributors and will become XKO Group. As part of the deal £13m is being raised through a share placing. The revamp has been organised by Simon Beard who becomes deputy chairman and finance director. CCI shares arrived on AIM in 1998 and moved between 108p and 190p.

London & Edinburgh Publishing held at 10.75p. It placed, through Townsley & Co, 1.1 million shares at 11p. On Monday the company, thought to be in talks for a substantial acquisition, produced an upbeat trading statement indicating profits for last year could approach £400,000.

SEAQ VOLUME: 1.17bn
SEAQ TRADES: 96152
GILTS: 114.61 - 1.12



Masaru Hayami, Bank of Japan governor, cut lending rates for banks. *Popperfoto/Reuters*

Japan springs surprise rate cut to 0.25%

THE BANK of Japan took action yesterday to try to boost the depressed economy, cutting its emergency and overnight lending rates for banks and providing extra funds to the money markets.

The surprise moves came a week ahead of a meeting of the Group of Seven industrial countries in Bonn. Finance ministers and central bankers will be focusing on how to revive the ailing Japanese economy, a precondition for restoring economic stability in the rest of South-east Asia.

The Bank of Japan's measures yesterday should take the sting out of criticism of the country's policies by its G7 partners. But the Bank's board rejected some politicians' proposals that it should buy Japanese government debt in the market.

This would have eased monetary conditions and helped bring long-term interest rates, which have climbed in recent months because of the expan-

BY DIANE COYLE
Economics Editor

sion of the government debt, back down.

The Bank's reluctance to do more to curb the rise in long-term bond yields in Japan hit bond markets in the US and Europe, where prices fell steeply.

The Bank of Japan halved the rate on its emergency lending facility to 0.25 per cent, and cut the rate on overnight loans in the interbank market to 0.15 per cent from 0.25 per cent. It also said it would inject extra funds into the money markets in order to ease credit conditions.

In a statement Masaru Hayami, the governor, said he hoped the moves would take long-term rates lower and thus help boost the economy. The official discount rate remained unchanged at its record low of 0.5 per cent.

The announcement initially sent the dollar a yen higher, past the Yen115 mark, but it later fell back to Yen114.15 as US Treasuries fell. Analysts were sceptical that the rate cuts would help the economy now in its second full year of recession. David Brickman at PaineWebber said: "It smacks of desperation. It is a tacit admission that the economy remains in dire straits."

Stephen Lewis, chief economist at Monument Derivatives, said extra liquidity was unlikely to help the economy until Japanese banks had strengthened their balance sheets and were able to lend to customers.

More and more economists, such as Paul Krugman, professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, favour radical measures - including the repurchase of government bonds to "monetise" the debt.

But until recently the US administration had opposed easier monetary policies that might weaken the yen and consequently widen the US trade gap. In the past two weeks, US officials have started urging monetary easing.

Bae warns of threat to arms division

BY MICHAEL HARRISON
Business Editor

BRITISH AEROSPACE is pressing the Government for assurances about future orders for its Royal Ordnance division amid speculation that the ailing armaments business may be bought by a rival German supplier.

Ministers are being warned that the entire future of RO, which employs 4,000 staff at 12 plants, will be in danger if the Ministry of Defence places further ammunition and explosives orders abroad rather than supporting its home supplier.

RO's Bishopton factory in Scotland is already closing with the loss of 400 jobs after the MoD chose to place a £100m order for artillery shell propellants with the South African firm Denel.

The head of the German munitions supplier, Rheinmetall, said earlier this week that it was interested in buying RO. Rheinmetall yesterday said that although it had been in discussions with Rheinmetall for a year, it had been about a joint venture, not an outright sale.

Referring to remarks made by Hans Brauner, chief executive of Rheinmetall, at a press conference on Thursday night, a BAE spokesman said: "If Rheinmetall have other ideas in mind we have not received them. We want them to put down a firm proposal. We have been talking for a year now and we still have not got one."

RO supplies everything from ammunition for small arms, rockets and tanks, to rifles, rocket motors and depth charges. It also owns the German sub-machine gun manufacturer Heckler & Koch.

BAE bought the business 10 years ago from the Government for £190m. Since then it has closed or sold 10 Royal Ordnance sites and slashed the workforce by 80 per cent. Over the same period, its annual work load from the MoD has shrunk from £50m to £150m.

A BAE spokesman said that keeping RO as a standalone operation remained an option but it depended on what strategic capability in munitions supply the MoD wanted Britain to re-

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IN BRIEF

Setback in beer duty battle

THE COURT of Appeal yesterday refused to refer the brewer Shepherd Neame's fight against recent beer duty increases to the European Court of Justice. The Kent-based brewer claimed the increases were incompatible with European law and sought to win a reversal of an earlier High Court decision upholding the increases in duty. The trade director Jonathan Neame said the brewer would seek leave to appeal to the House of Lords.

Fibernet placing
FIBERNET, the supplier of electronic network systems, has placed 975,000 new shares at 446p a share, raising £4.35m before expenses, which will be used to extend its UK telecoms network and increase working capital. The placing expands the existing share capital by about 2.5 per cent.

Torex profits up
TOREX, the former plant-hire specialist which was reborn as an IT company in 1997, pushed up pre-tax profits by 22 per cent to £3.3m in its first full-year as a pure computer business, after excluding the profit from the sale of the old business in the previous year. Operating profit from ongoing businesses rose 96 per cent to £3.4m. The medical division doubled in size, the retail division expanded and a new services division was created.

Correction
A NUMBER of readers have asked us to point out a factual inaccuracy in the Business Outlook column of 12 January. The effective rise in the BAT Industries share price since demerger was not, as stated, threefold, but 60 per cent. We apologise for any confusion caused by this mistake.

Name	Turnover (£)	Pre-tax (£)	EPS	Dividend	Pay day	X-div
AEI Industries (I)	17,000m (15.931m)	1,602m (1,543m)	7.2p (2.3p)	-	-	-
Shire Group (I)	193,718m (201,953m)	-1,081m (2,056m)	-4.8p (8p)	0.30p (3p)	04.05.99	23.03.99
Lloyds TSB Group (F)	-	3,285m (2,883m)	42.4p (41.1p)	22.0p (12.3p)	05.05.99	22.03.99
London Portland Co (F)	1,827m (2,877m)	-56.513m (26,479m)	-48.78p (28.96p)	6.0p (12.3p)	-	-
Torex (F)	21,770m (21,025m)	2,982m (7,277m)	6.8p (16.2p)	2.6p (2.3p)	14.05.99	08.03.99

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This notice is issued in compliance with the requirements of the London Stock Exchange Limited (the "London Stock Exchange"). This notice should be read in conjunction with the Prospectus dated 12 February 1999 (the "Prospectus") which contains details of recommended Proposals for *inter alia* a Bonus issue and redesignation of share capital. It does not constitute an offer or invitation to the public to subscribe for, or purchase, any shares in Murray Smaller Markets Trust PLC (the "Company"). Application has been made to the London Stock Exchange for up to 339 million Ordinary Shares and 2.4 million 8 Ordinary Shares to be admitted to the Official List of the London Stock Exchange and for half of such Ordinary Shares and 8 Ordinary Shares in issue following Admission to be immediately redesignated as Zero Dividend Preference Shares resulting in up to 196.7 million Ordinary Shares, 1.2 million 8 Ordinary Shares and 197.7 million Zero Dividend Preference Shares. The actual number of such shares will depend upon the Formula Asset Value of the Company on or about 11 March 1999. The prices of the Ordinary Shares, 8 Ordinary Shares, Zero Dividend Preference Shares, Ordinary Units and 8 Ordinary Units will be quoted separately on the Official List. It is expected that Admission will become effective, and that dealings will commence, on 19 March 1999.

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13 February 1999

SPORT

Rugby Union: Former Lions manager sets out on mission to restore 'culture' of the English game



Fran Cotton: 'The Scottish, Welsh and Irish are our rugby friends, yet we have been completely duplicitous with them. We have tried to act like bully boys and they don't like it'

Calzaghe provides the main attraction

BOXING

BY GLEN LEACH

RUUD GULLITS heavily hyped introduction of "sexy" football to the North-east may have boosted support for tonight's world championship boxing promotion in Newcastle. The main eventers, Joe Calzaghe and Robin Reid, are, after all, uncommonly handsome given the nature of their trade, and their combined style might have outweighed the lack of substance left in a fight card hit hard by a series of withdrawals.

Only two of the originally advertised four world title fights now remain, following the cancellation of contests featuring Herbie Hide, the World Boxing Organisation heavy-weight champion, and Harry Simon, the WBO's light-middleweight titleholder. The 13-fight card is now headlined by Calzaghe's third defence of the WBO super-middleweight title against Reid, plus Richie Woodhall's second defence of the World Boxing Council version of the 12-stone championship, against the eccentric Italian Vincenzo Nardiello, a former holder of this title.

"It's the business we're in," complained the promoter, Frank Warren. "In football, if a player gets injured, the team still plays. I'm not happy. But we've still had a great response from the people of Newcastle." He predicts a near-sell-out at the 10,800-seat Telewest Arena.

Warren had successfully featured established stars such as Nigel Benn and Naseem Hamed in Newcastle previously, but tonight's contestants are from the next generation, fighters who have been developed on satellite rather than terrestrial TV. It is, therefore, heartening for Warren that this show has been so well supported at the box office.

But this is hardly the dream return to the big stage that Warren had been hoping for following the settlement, at a cost of £7.5m, of his 14-month legal war with his former partner Don King, and his increasingly acrimonious split with Hamed.

Calzaghe, 27, replaces Hamed as the star of Warren's stable. The Gwent southpaw, unbeaten in 25 fights (23 KOs), is fast, vicious and hard-hitting, as shown by his title-winning fight against Chris Eubank in October 1997, and two defences last year before being sidelined by hand injuries.

But Calzaghe's attempts to emulate Hamed's extravagant ring entrances are proving nothing short of embarrassing. It would be crass to judge him so were it not for the premium Calzaghe himself places upon such superlatives. Much of Calzaghe's pre-fight banter has centred on a belief that he is "better looking" than 27-year-old Reid, a former WBC champion and part-time male model who has won 26 of 28 fights (one loss, one draw, 18 KOs). It is likely that Reid will look the worse for wear after 12 tough rounds. Calzaghe should retain by decision, as should the 30-year-old Woodhall, who has a point to prove following a lacklustre performance last time out.

Sky TV will be less than happy with the disintegration of the British half of a transatlantic pay-per-view double-header that also features Oscar De La Hoya's WBC welterweight title defence against Ike Quarteley in Las Vegas. Sky has already suffered a major body blow this week when Hamed signed away worldwide TV rights to the American cable giant Home Box Office, with whom Sky must now negotiate in order to continue televising Hamed's fights. But De La Hoya is the biggest non-heavyweight star in boxing and continuing his unbeaten run tonight will afford Sky some comfort.

Cotton leads the call for change

FRAN COTTON in a line-out on the 1977 British Lions tour of New Zealand, looking like a creature recently risen from a primeval swamp, is one of the most indelible of all sporting images. But now Cotton believes that his beloved rugby union is in a mire even deeper and dirtier than that one in Wellington.

On Thursday morning Cotton - once as formidable a loose-head prop as international rugby has seen, and more recently an equally formidable manager of the Lions tour to South Africa - picked me up at Macclesfield station in Cheshire. His sleek Mercedes offered a hint that Cotton Traders, the clothing company he founded 12 years ago with his former England colleague Steve Smith, is thriving mightily.

As we cruised towards the Cotton Traders empire in Altrincham, Cotton's carphone rang. Suddenly the Merc was filled with the deep and unmistakable voice of Bill Beaumont, calling to register his dismay at the state of English rugby.

Cotton believes that the management board of the Rugby Football Union is leading the game - if, he swiftly adds, it can be said to show any leadership qualities at all - to disarray. He is one of the most powerful advocates of the so-called Reform Group, whose stated objective is to depose the board, to introduce policies designed to win back the trust of the Scottish, Welsh and Irish rugby unions, and to re-



BRIAN VINER

store the "culture" of the game in England.

While it is impossible to imagine Cotton actually turning cartwheels, he certainly shed no tears at this week's news that Sir John Hall is to sell his rugby interests at Newcastle. "Sir John and other investors filled a massive vacuum that was created when professionalism was introduced in a totally ill-considered way," said Cotton.

In the Cotton Traders boardroom, he warmed to his theme, starting with the "fiasco" of England's brief expulsion from the Five Nations tournament. "That must be the biggest embarrassment in rugby history," he said. "To be expelled, and then reinstated within 15 hours only because they were forced to accept unequivocally the Five Nations accord, which should never have been broken in the first

place. In business, you would never allow yourself to get backed into a corner like that."

The Scottish, Welsh and Irish unions were entitled to feel aggrieved with the English stance, added Cotton who, nearly a year ago, resigned in disgust as vice-chairman of the management board. "These people are our rugby friends, we've been playing them for years, yet we have been completely duplicitous with them. We have tried to act like bully boys. And they are proud men, they don't like it."

"Besides, it would have been a disaster to replace the Five Nations with a super-tournament for England, France, New Zealand, Australia and South Africa, as some of the management board wanted. Scotland, Ireland and Wales being strong ought to be as important to us as it is to them."

"We should be working to expand European rugby. It is fantastic that Italy is joining the Five Nations, that a game still perceived as Anglo-Saxon suddenly has a Latin country involved. Now let's work on Germany. We have millions of people to market the game to in Europe. In the southern hemisphere there are an awful lot of sheep."

The RFU's deal with Sky television, Cotton added, "has been an absolute disaster for the game, dividing the five nations at a time when we needed unity of purpose".

Moreover, he maintained that the £87.5m five-year Sky deal, quite aside from alienating the other home nations, was commercially unsound. His reasoning seemed to make plenty of sense. In matters of finance, 6ft 4in, 18-stone former maths teachers with £22m of business interests generally do make sense.

"First of all, the deal that the Celts did with the BBC was actually far better," said Cotton. "Last Saturday, the BBC had 6.6 million viewers for the double-header (Ireland v France and Scotland v Wales) with not a white shirt in sight! Before Christmas, when England played the world champions, there were 500,000 viewers on Sky. So it is clearly not a good deal in terms of selling the sport."

"Then there is the £4.1 million given each year to the professional clubs. Who decided on that figure? It is an inflated value and it does the game a great disservice, because all it is doing is fuelling the rampant payment of players."

"Below a certain level, the game will only survive by staying amateur. Take my old club Newton le Willows. They have lost 10 players to Southport because Southport are paying them 30 quid a week. It's a crazy situation. I went to a meeting at another of my old clubs, Liverpool St Helens, and they are just overwhelmed by it. They don't want to stop paying travelling expenses

because someone down the road will. But they can't afford it. We need a blanket ban on the payment of players below a certain level, and funding should instead go into chubbiness and youth policies."

"Look at Billy Beaumont's club, Fylde. They get £250,000 a year from the Sky pot and it's destroyed them. They are trying to recruit players and be professional but it's an amateur club, and now they find they're having to sell the pitch to survive. Waterloo are having to sell the back pitch. We need to take the petrol can away and say: 'If you want to keep the fire burning, and the coal yourself, I tell you, they'll welcome it.'"

"Then the entire game will be funded by international rugby, with the interests of professional rugby properly catered for, and a small area of semi-professional rugby in which clubs can use local sponsorship to reward players."

"But professionalism will only account for one per cent of the game. The remaining 99 per cent will return to the amateur principles that allowed this game to thrive. Otherwise the tragedy that is about to befall rugby league, in which a super-league gets all the money and the rest are left to get on with it, will happen to us."

Cotton also believes that professional playing regulations have damaged rugby's grass roots. "They have to have a certain number of subs on the bench, front row cover,

so there are lots of lads not getting a game. And naturally they lose interest. Orrell very often can't get fixtures for their second and third XV's, clubs that used to run eight teams are down to three. The game is in crisis and desperate for positive leadership."

If the Reform Group gets a chance to provide that leadership, it will devote the day-to-day running of rugby to four provincial unions, explained Cotton. "The current league system doesn't work because of the distances involved. Twickenham doesn't know how to run rugby in the north of England, its proposals show it doesn't even know the geography of the place. They can run the international side and govern the game, and autonomous provincial unions will look after the day-to-day affairs. As for the top end of the game, if the ERU were to stand up and say that it is fully supportive of the International Rugby Board, and that the Five - soon-to-be Six - Nations is the collective property of those nations, relations with our international partners would be transformed overnight."

As I took my leave of the Cotton Traders boardroom, following Cotton's impressively articulate and impassioned monologue, I asked him about that famous 1977 photograph of him in New Zealand. It took him three days to get all the mud off, he said. Would that rugby could clean up its act as quickly.

The dangers of planning ahead in Rotherham

DETAILED PLAN. Detailed plan. Forgive me, but I get uncomfortable when I see those words together. Because in my experience, you can say only one thing with certainty about a detailed plan. It won't happen.

Let me share with you, by way of evidence, Rotherham.

That is, my trip to Rotherham on the half of a sadly defunct Sunday newspaper some years ago.

Admit it. You're hooked already. Anyway, this was the schedule. Get up to Rotherham. Book into hotel. Find park where fun run involving local-lad-made-good. Peter Elliott, is due to take place. Watch Elliott, newly installed Commonwealth 1500 metres champion, run. Then interview him about prospects for coming season. Eat. Drink. Return to hotel. Sleep. Return home.



MIKE ROWBOTTOM

Hardly an excruciatingly detailed plan, I grant you. But quite complex enough to unravel.

The hotel was, effectively, a boarding house with add-ons, and my room was in a separate block

close to the main building. Soon after I went in, the speaker by my bed began playing Radio 1 at maximum volume. My reactions in such cases are usually spot on.

With some judicious pressing of buttons, I quashed the noise in a split-minute.

Elliott was already there when I got to the park, but something in his face betrayed trouble. His Achilles tendon was playing up again. All very disappointing. But he would contribute to the charity fund-raising occasion by getting the field of several hundred strong under way.

So the Olympian found himself standing on a podium with a starting pistol raised high above his head - a starting pistol that, for some reason, he was unable to fire. He fiddled with it a bit as the dense mass

of runners waited, the pressure of bodies forcing those at the front to tip over the line. Then he raised his arm and tried again. Nothing.

By now, the front markers had advanced 20 yards to accommodate the gathering momentum of those behind, and as Elliott, face flushing beneath his cropped ginger hair, made one more hopeless attempt, the will of the people became indomitable and the whole mass of runners straggled on their way.

Afterwards, the embarrassed Olympian explained that, as he had said, his Achilles tendon was playing up again, but that he was hoping for the best and there was no reason to suppose he wouldn't be back to full training within the week. Although you always had to be cautious.

Quite a scoop, I'm sure you'll agree.

The eating and drinking bits went smoothly. Particularly the drinking bits, as I recall.

Odd thing, but the location of the hotel seemed to have changed by the time I made my way back. The landmarks of the railway station and shopping precinct never registered on my screen, and I found myself exploring mysterious, suburban avenues under the yellow flare of street lights. A fine rain began to fall - the kind you hardly register until you realise your collar is soaked.

It was after midnight by the time I got back. The main entrance was locked and the lights were off. I buzzed the buzzer for several minutes. It appeared to be in the same working order as Elliott's pistol.

There was nothing else for it. If I couldn't get the key to my room, at least I could get under cover, so I made my way into the sub-boardroom, climbed the stairs and curled up in my wet coat outside my door. As you do.

Sleep did not come easily. But it departed effortlessly at 5am when the speaker by my bed burst into life. Radio 1 again, and even through the door it sounded very loud indeed.

A door opened down the corridor, and a man in pyjamas with sticky-up hair stared at me without saying anything. I assume he didn't say anything, although if he had said anything I would have been unable to hear him.

The radio switched itself off after a few minutes. And back on again a few minutes later. And off again.

Perhaps someone had been fiddling about with the alarm buttons. Someone...

Let me share with you, by way of further evidence, Grimsby.

That is, my trip to Grimsby on behalf of the same Sunday newspaper some years ago.

The idea was to interview Steve Cram, who was taking part in the Northern Championships, only that plan had to be altered as he pulled out at short notice with a calf problem, so I switched my attention to the up-and-coming middle-distance runners Craig Winrow and Paul Burgess, only as it turned out they had a bad day and finished well down the field, which meant I had to...

On second thoughts, I won't tell you about Grimsby. You've probably got the picture by now.

Rugby Union: Reform Group's plan for Anglo-centric clubs at odds with players' foreign approval

Melting pot's successful recipe

GO ON, indulge yourself. Pick an Allied Dunbar Premiership XV based not on reputation, but exclusively on current form; a multi-faceted, multi-national side you would happily send into battle this very afternoon with your life in their hands. Many locals on the team-sheet? No, thought not. You would have to be a one-eyed Old Harrovian with John Bull underwear and a Kipling obsession to even dream of selecting a home-grown back division, let alone a native outside-half. Maybe the prophets of doom are right: perhaps the English are facing meltdown in the melting pot.

It is an issue that is likely to burst wide open once again in the coming weeks as our old friends the politicians prepare to bombard us with more heavy shelling from the trenches. The Rugby Football Union's Reform Group is proposing the establishment of a new generation of "super clubs" with up to 90 per cent of the places ring-fenced for England-qualified players. Can it be right, they ask, that the most complete stand-offs on view each Saturday should be two former-All Blacks, two Frenchmen and an ambitious little thirty-something from Pietermaritzburg? Good question.

Of course, the balloon really will go up if Clive Woodward asks Joel Stransky to attach a red rose to the very part of his breast that once bore a dancing Springbok. There is no doubt that in a perfect world, the England coach would not contemplate asking Leicester's hugely accomplished South African to steer the country with the biggest playing population on the planet through the highs and lows of this year's World Cup. Imperfection is the curse of the age, though. It now seems clear that Woodward will indeed bite the pragmatic bullet if he decides there is no alternative. You have to feel for the bloke. His predicament merely underlines the knicker-twisting complexity of the foreign legion debate.

"It's very difficult, all this," Woodward agreed this week. "I know what I think should be happening. I think that the clubs and the union should be standing on the same side of the fence and working together to produce the best possible conditions for England's success at international level. I think that the union should be pumping money into the clubs, in much the same way as the Test and County Cricket Board helps finance the counties. I still look at other rugby nations and envy the systems they have put in place to ensure a flow of talent through the ranks."

"But when push comes to shove, I have to come at things as a professional coach running a professional team, even though I'm effectively having to

BY CHRIS HEWETT

do it through 12 or 14 other companies and have no real input into what goes on with the players in so far as no club coach is likely to select according to my wishes. In the end, England expects. Especially in World Cup year. This is a business enterprise as well as a sporting one and there are a lot of things at stake, not least my job. If someone like Stransky is genuinely the best man for the task and the regulations allow me to pick him, then I'd be daft not to consider it.

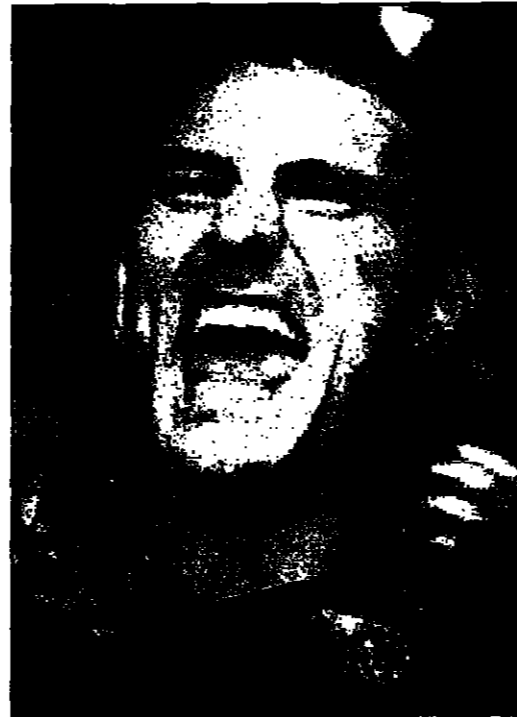
"I fully accept, though, that it would be an indictment of our own system. I've nothing against foreign players earning their living in the Premiership; as long as clubs aren't picking them over and above English talent just because they happen to be paying them a fortune, then fine. But I get a little impatient with the constant comparisons with football. Football is a level playing field; most major football leagues are stacked with imports. It's different with rugby. You don't see outsiders playing Super 12 rugby, do you?"

No one knows better than Woodward how the purple-faced traditionalists are likely to react if he rejects Little Englandism and clambers into bed with the open door brigade; after all, it was only a year or so ago that the coach himself was hanging the nationalist drum like Buddy Rich on steroids.

But 18 long months in the political crossfire have changed him. There are, he now realises, no simple answers or cosy solutions. Only differences of opinion.

The import problem, if indeed it is a problem, is merely one of the more pressing in an entire catalogue of dilemmas. Joost van der Westhuizen, Gary Teichmann, Josh Kronfeld, Ian Jones and dear old Jonah Lomu have all been linked with moves to England after the World Cup. If Van der Westhuizen goes to Saracens and Teichmann to Wasps, what happens to Kyran Bracken and Lawrence Dallaglio? Will they stay, or will they go?

On the other hand, virtually every England Test regular revels in the heady cultural and tactical mix that gives the Premiership its uniqueness. "Negative comments about overseas players come from outside the game," says Jeremy Guscott in this month's *Rugby World* magazine. "Premiership players all believe the foreign signings have had a big impact on the professional game over here. The way I see it, an overseas player has to make his mark both on the field and in how he integrates into the club and community."



Six of the best currently playing in Premiership One (clockwise from top left): Conor O'Shea of Ireland, South African Brendan Venter, New Zealand Steve Boshop, Pat Lam of Samoa, England's own Lawrence Dallaglio and Federico Mendez of Argentina

"François Pienaar had clearly done this. Others, like Trevor Leota, took a little time to settle, but is now doing a tremendous job."

Ask Bracken, for instance, to put a price on the experience of playing between Pienaar and Michael Lynagh for a season and he will quote you the rugby equivalent of seven figures. Ask young David Flatman, one of the brightest front-row prospects to emerge in many years (and a pure-bred Englishman from Kent, to boot) what it means to learn the tricks of the trade from Robert Graham, and he will answer you in a single word: "Everything."

And it is not just in England that the mood is changing; the ultra-conservative Celts are suddenly very right-on when it comes to recruitment. It will not be long before the Scots field a

side with barely a real Scot in it; you will wait a very long time for an "och aye" from Glenn Metcalfe, Shaun Longstaff, John Leslie, Matthew Proudfoot, Martin Leslie or Gordon Simpson. As for Ireland, no fewer than 11 of the side who pushed France to within a point in Dublin a week ago are either playing their rugby in the English Premiership or did so in the previous 12 months.

So, in answer to an earlier question, we have not reached meltdown point. Rather, the melting pot is bubbling away to the benefit of most, if not all.

You may not agree with the Premiership XV published here: you might prefer Keith Wood to Federico Mendez, Kevin Puli to Bracken, Zinzan Brooke to Pat Lam, Stransky to Stephen Boshop. So what? At least you have the choice.

- CHRIS HEWETT'S PREMIERSHIP XV
- 15 **Conor O'Shea** (London Irish and Ireland): Gavin Hastings on speed. A buccaneering full-back to die for.
 - 14 **Justin Bishop** (London Irish and Ireland): Quicker than most, more confident than any and bristling with aggression.
 - 13 **Rob Henderson** (Wasps and Ireland): A tank on legs. Nothing false or cosmetic, apart from his day-glo hair.
 - 12 **Brendan Venter** (London Irish and South Africa): The complete inside centre: completely committed, completely professional.
 - 11 **Niall Woods** (London Irish and Ireland): Great finishing, terrific goal-kicking. The Irish are mad not to pick him.
 - 10 **Steve Boshop** (London Irish and New Zealand): Monster talent. Better conductor than Solti and enough vision to fill a Bible.
 - 9 **Kyran Bracken** (Saracens and England): Operating on all four cylinders. The best scrum-half in Europe on current estimates.
 - 8 **Pat Lam** (Northampton and Western Samoa): Need a winning try in the last minute? Give it to Pat, he'll see you home. Brilliant.
 - 7 **Duane Monkley** (West Hartlepool and New Zealand A): The "Mooloo Man" flies in, the no-hopers start fronting up. A coincidence?
 - 6 **Lawrence Dallaglio** (Wasps and England): On the ball or off it, the warrior king remains an inspiration. A born leader.
 - 5 **Malcolm O'Kelly** (London Irish and Ireland): A genuine new-age lock: more Michael Jordan than Bill Beaumont. Pure class.
 - 4 **Martin Johnson** (Leicester and England): Back on song. More dependable than a best mate, more threatening than a worst enemy.
 - 3 **Paul Wallace** (Saracens and Ireland): Quick, intelligent, highly skilled. Can this be a prop forward we're talking about?
 - 2 **Federico Mendez** (Northampton and Argentina): Hated Bath, loves Franklins Gardens. A happy Freddy is one dangerous customer.
 - 1 **Trevor Woodman** (Gloucester and England): A new kid on the Kingsholm block, but putting his power-puff clubmates to shame.

Cautious approach followed by Giants

BASKETBALL
BY RICHARD TAYLOR

SHEFFIELD SHARKS are wary of losing ground in the Budweiser League title race this weekend to the joint leaders, Manchester Giants, but elsewhere the focus will be on the commission of inquiry meeting to decide punishments following the "bottle of Northgate".

Despite the cautious approach of their coach, Nick Nurse, the Giants must be odds-on for maximum points from tonight's game at Worthing Bears and tomorrow's visit from Leicester City Riders.

But the Sharks, beaten 81-77 by the Giants in their midweek uni-ball Trophy semi-final, first leg, face a difficult trip to third-placed Thames Valley Tigers tonight.

A far more daunting weekend awaits Derby Storm and Chester Jets, whose game at the Northgate Arena two weeks ago was halted after 28 seconds by fighting between both sets of players. The commission expects to announce their decision on Monday, which could include fines, suspensions and deduction of points.

Any appeals from the clubs or individuals would theoretically lead to the suspension of any punishment on players or coaches involved. The Derby coach, Bob Donewald, for example, is facing a minimum four-game ban pending appeals and his club defend a 13-point lead at Leicester on Thursday in the second leg of their uni-ball Trophy semi-final.

But Derby and Chester had to present their cases to the commission by Thursday, ruling out the option of basing any appeals by claiming new evidence.

Hounslow in need of points

HOCKEY
BY BILL COLWILL

FOR HOUNSLOW, this weekend's double Premier League fixtures are probably the most crucial in the club's long and distinguished history. Defeat at home last weekend by Bourville leaves them three points adrift of the Midlands club in the relegation play-off position. Points from today's away game at Reading and the visit of Guildford tomorrow are badly needed.

The manager, Paul King, confirmed that the Seoul gold medalist, Jon Potter, who has come out of retirement to help the club, will be playing both days and that the Canadian goalkeeper Hari Kant is back from international duty in Egypt.

King said: "Let's hope the tide has changed. Points will be difficult at Reading and anything will be a bonus. It is essential we take three off Guildford." With Guildford's player-coach, Ian Jennings, looking for two more goals to become the first player to score 200 in league games, it will not be easy. Southgate, who lost 5-3 to Reading last week, visit Guildford today and entertain East Grinstead tomorrow. They again expect to be without their latest signing, the Australian international Max Diamond.

Surbiton, the new First Division leaders, will be looking for victory over Hampstead and Westminster before their South African imports return home for internationals against Australia.

Leicester face examination by Irish imagination

THE BIG Premiership rumble of the season has arrived five weeks early. Until very recently, this campaign was all about next month's tête-à-tête between Northampton and Leicester at Franklins Gardens; a raw slab of East Midlands tribalism that appeared to represent the Saints' one realistic chance of reeling in the long-time title favourites from the wrong side of the county line. No one gave a second thought to London Irish. Or a third thought, or a fourth.

Since then, everyone in rugby has started thinking - and talking - about the Irish. They

have gatecrashed the mind's eye with the quicksilver imagination of their attacking play and selfless deeds of defensive derring-do. With Dick Best at the helm, Steve Boshop at the fulcrum and Conor O'Shea in his pomp, they have won nine of their last 10 league matches going into this afternoon's near-18,000 sell-out at Welford Road. It is almost as breathtaking to watch these Exiles as it must be to play for them.

All of which probably explains why Best, crafty old fox that he is, wants to dampen expectation rather than inflame it. "Leicester have no weakness-

es," he mused yesterday. "They have seven internationals in their pack and their defence has conceded far fewer points than anyone else. They will probably be worthy champions." The coach rarely reveals his entire hand and he is not wholly unfamiliar with the black arts of kiology, but on this occasion he was being deadly serious.

Not least because Best has three of his form players - Nick Burrows, Kieron Dawson and Malcolm O'Kelly - on the treatment table. Although he can reintroduce the muscular Robert Todd to his midfield, employ Ryan Strudwick's all-

purpose virtuosity in the second row and recall Isaac Fea'uni to a back row also boasting Jake Boer and Rob Gallacher, Welford Road is not the place to attempt victory with a side short of optimum clout.

"Leicester are the final barrier," agreed Best. "If we lose, they go eight points clear of us and it almost becomes a one-horse race."

Not that Dean Richards, whose own England career owed something to Best's guidance during the early years of this decade, was taken in for a moment. "Dick has done exceptionally well in moulding a

new London Irish team," he pointed out. "That's a mark of Dick's talents as a coach and also says something about the quality of the men he has brought in." Deano named no names, but the words Boshop, Boer, Brendan Venter and Kevin Puli, that inspirational little scrum-half from New Zealand via Natal, would have been close to his lips.

Leicester go in, yet again, without their most gifted three-quarter. Will Greenwood. Indeed, there is deep concern over the chronic groin problems that continue to prevent him doing anything more active

than taking forlorn strolls around Welford Road.

Greenwood has played only five matches, one of them as a replacement, for his club this term and the Tigers top brass, and by extension the England management, are now fearful that the 26-year-old centre is suffering from the same condition that once sidelined Jeremy Guscott, his putative World Cup partner, for a season.

Down in the West Country at Gloucester, Kingsholm will be in mourning at the news of Will Carling's withdrawal from the Harlequins squad for today's mid-table contest. The Shed

regulars had been preparing a torrent of verbal vitriol, but a minor leg strain keeps England's former captain safely out of range. More to the point, perhaps, Dan Luger has been forced to vacate his left-wing berth with a similar problem.

Wasps, who plunged Bath into another mini-crisis by sticking 35 unanswered points on them last Sunday, give Kenny Logan an immediate recall to the left wing for the match at Bedford. Victory would cement the Londoners' place in the top six, which may well be the cut-off point for any European Cup qualification.

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Jackson rediscovers his pride

Wales' top hurdler, still the 110 metres world record holder, has recovered his hunger for competition and predicts success in the two major titles to elude him. By Mike Rowbottom

TWO MAJOR titles have eluded Colin Jackson in his 12-year international career - but don't worry, he has them in his sights. "One I'm going to pick up in three weeks' time," he says with a chuckle. "The other one I'm going to pick up in 19 months."

Jackson's prediction of success at next month's World Indoor Championships and next year's Olympics would have constituted a clear case of wishful thinking had it been made a couple of years ago. But now, you could picture it happening. At the age of 31 - 32 next Thursday - he has rediscovered the intensity which once established him as the world's greatest high hurdler.

While his friend and erstwhile business partner, Linford Christie, is enjoying an open-ended excursion from the retirement he announced two years ago, Jackson, who runs over 60m hurdles in tomorrow's

Bupa Indoor Grand Prix at Birmingham, has never physically absented himself from the competitive arena. In mental terms, however, he has made a major comeback after what he refers to with uncharacteristic sobriety as his "dark years".

He spent much of 1996 embroiled in an acrimonious pay row involving the British Athletic Federation and Nuff Respect, the management group he founded with Christie. Jackson, who claimed he had been lectured "like a schoolboy" by the BAF executive chairman, Peter Radford, vowed never to run in any domestic meetings while Radford was still in his job. He missed the 1996 World Championships, claiming that the Federation had given him

insufficient leeway to prove his fitness after a bout of tonsillitis. The following year was scarcely better, as he finished fourth in the Olympic Games, hampered by a knee injury that was only cured by a cartilage operation in September 1997.

"I basically couldn't be bothered," he recalled. "It was just after the battle with the Federation, and my body was starting to crack up. I thought: 'Dear God, just tell me, what is the point?' I had no pleasure in performing well. My pride had been shattered."

Retirement seemed logical. But before accepting that, Jackson - who set the current 110m hurdles world record of 12.91sec six years ago - decided to make one last attempt to

prove a point, as much to himself as anyone else. The testing ground was Athens, for the 1997 World Championships.

"Coming fourth or fifth in major championships was no good for a world record holder," he said. "I thought that if I couldn't actually win a medal at these championships I should consider my future in the sport."

Against all expectation, he won silver behind the American who has dominated the event in the last three years, Allen Johnson. "That was a big thing for me. When Allen saw how I was running in the heats, he apparently said 'Oh dear, Colin's back.'"

With pride in his performance restored, Jackson set about cutting his ties with Nuff Respect, which he felt was

draining his time, and moving to Bath to restore closer links with the coach who had guided him since junior days, Malcolm Arnold.

"Malcolm makes at least half-a-second's difference to my time," Jackson said. "He notices all the technical problems, and he's always looking for perfection. It forces you to concentrate when you know he's there hounding you."

Last August, Jackson earned the third European title of his career in a time of 13.02sec before deciding to run in a lucrative Japanese meeting the following month rather than seeking a hat-trick of Commonwealth victories.

"I didn't need another Commonwealth title in my head," he said, adding that he half ex-

pected the ferocious criticism his decision generated in Wales. But he still feels hurt by the reaction. "People forget a lot," he said. "For instance, Roger Black missed the 1994 Commonwealth Games and ran in Rieti. I thought to myself, 'Jesus, is it only me they pick on?'"

Jackson, however, is concerned with what he regards as the bigger picture - his return to the level he reached in his World Championship year, 1993.

Part of his motivation stems from a desire to show the training group he works with, athletes such as Allison Curbishley, Tatum Nelson and the 21-year-old fellow hurdler Ross Baillie, the power of mental application.

"I want to show people what Colin Jackson is made of," he

said. "I want to inspire other athletes, particularly those in my group, that you can have bad years but you can always come back - if you put your mind to it."

Jackson takes a pride in passing on his experience to his younger charges, not least in being ultra-cautious about taking any substances to enhance performance. "I take creatine - it's something that works very well for me. But anything I take is checked first by the International Amateur Athletic Federation, and I get a certificate back. If you make one mistake it can have huge consequences."

Baillie will join Jackson in Maebashi, Japan, next month as the Welshman seeks the world indoor title he would have had in Toronto in 1993 had it not been for the flying start allowed to Canada's Mark McKoy. Jackson's anger in Munich last weekend, when he was



Jackson: Confident mood

frustrated by a similarly blatant flyer from Germany's Falk Baiser, provided ample evidence of an athlete who cares desperately about his performance - very far from the disillusioned figure of 1996.

As he homes in on next month's target, his intention at the National Indoor Arena tomorrow is to beat the meeting record of 7.38sec. His own record, presumably? "Yeah." So, final question. Is he in similar form this year to last? He replies in the negative. "No, no, no," he says. "Much better."

Waugh revels in role of captain

WHEN STEVE Waugh heard that he had been confirmed as the next Test captain of Australia, it was 8.42 in the morning and he was watching *Sesame Street* on television. This homely image is not the sort normally associated with the toughest customer around.

"I'm used to seeing it as my daughter, Rosalie, watches it every day," he said, a few hours later, enhancing the cosiness. It embodied the difference between Waugh the professional cricketer and Waugh the good bloke. Playing the game is his job (and mercifully his passion) and he brings to it all the hard-nosed cussedness necessary to win.

If it was the old West, Waugh would be the gun-slinging hombre you would least like to meet on the dusty main street. You might not turn around to run but your mouth would go dry and you would pray there was an afterlife. It is like that for bowlers when he makes his flat-footed, broad-beamed way to the crease, his gaze immovable, his spirit unbreakable. He will bring that sort of approach to his captaincy.

"I guess it's a bit like when I first got picked for the Australian side as a 20-year-old," he said. "I guess I was overwhelmed there, and a bit anxious and frightened of what lay ahead. I'm really excited. I know my cricket is in good shape."

It was natural in the way of these things that when he was paraded officially for the first time as the 40th captain of his country, he was asked when he might be thinking about retiring. His answer might have sent shivers down bowling backs.

"At the moment I get a real buzz out of going into bat if the team is in a bit of trouble at 30 for 3 against good bowlers and on a wicket that's doing a bit. I get really excited about that. I love to go out and fight in that situation. If I go out there one day and the team really need me and I'm not fired up or ready for the situation it's time to walk away, and that might be next

year, it might be five years or never." It did not sound like it would be tomorrow.

This was Waugh the cricketer talking, and while he is a different character from his predecessor, Mark Taylor, he will give a similar amount of change to the opposition. No change at all, that is. He said he would not have to alter much because Australia had a winning formula, although he did think they might have drawn matches they had lost and could be better in second-innings run chases.

Waugh will lead the side for the first time on their tour of the West Indies, upon which they embark next week. His vice-captain will be Shane Warne, the only other realistic candidate for the leadership, who has done a splendidly adventurous job in the Carlton & United triangular one-day series this past month while Waugh has been recovering from a hamstring injury.

"We're looking forward to working together and I think we complement each other pretty well," he said, immediately calming any fears that they would no longer be pals. "He's pretty flamboyant and outgoing and I guess I'm a little bit the other way."

Waugh also gave the broadest indication that the leg-spinning debate on whether Warne should be picked ahead of the new kid on the block, Stuart MacGill, would be pretty brief in his selection meetings. Warne has taken 315 wickets in 68 Tests at 24.97 and MacGill has taken 47 in eight at 21.78. Of Warne he said: "People tend to forget he has taken 315 Test wickets at over five per match and he has been a great bowler. I always think form is temporary and class is permanent. We should remember that. He's a great bowler and he's not going to let you down."

"Stuart MacGill has been tremendous in his first few



Steve Waugh, Australia's new captain, faces the press: 'I'm really excited. I know my cricket is in good shape' PA

Tests. He's coming on in leaps and bounds. I think he's going to turn into a great Test bowler. You've got to take into consideration who's bowling well and whether somebody has got a psychological advantage over the opposition."

Waugh has already made plans to deal with any crises over poor form, which dogged Taylor for long periods while he was captain. Sometimes Taylor would cut short his own practice to deal with his other responsibilities. Perhaps, Waugh suggested, his form suffered. Waugh intends to have a word with his senior players (brother Mark, Ian Healy, Glenn McGrath) and delegate if he feels

he needs more practice. "If you're smart you learn from those sorts of people."

While his stern demeanour conceals it during play, Waugh is an old romantic about the game. Why, you can almost see a tear in that steely eye when he talks about the baggy green cap which he always wears and likes to see the other players wear during the first session of matches.

"Growing up as a young kid I always thought of playing for Australia. That was my dream. I'm still rapt by being the 35th player for Australia. I never dreamed of being captain." And he will not be dreaming in Trinidad next month either.

Darrell Hair, the Australian umpire, was the subject of two press releases from the Australian Cricket Board yesterday. The first revealed that his hearing on charges of bringing the game into disrepute had taken place. He was found guilty on two charges while another two were dismissed.

Hair was charged under the International Cricket Council's Code of Conduct after making certain allegations about the Sri Lankan spin bowler, Muttiah Muralitharan in his book, *Decision Maker*. He gained notoriety for no-balling the off-spinner seven times on Sri Lanka's tour to Australia in 1995 and in his book

he describes the bowler's action as "diabolical".

However, Hair has escaped punishment because the ICC's code of conduct commissioner, Judge Gordon Lewis, could not identify a penalty process in the ICC's code relating to umpires. The ICC's chief executive, David Richardson, said yesterday that the judge's views will be referred to the council's solicitors, and that the ICC would look at reviewing their regulations in light of the decision.

The second press release merely stated that Hair - yes, the man guilty of two disreputable charges - would be Australia's umpiring representative on the World Cup panel of umpires.

In Smith's absence, 21-year-old Commonwealth silver medalist Ben Challenger will attempt to take the battle to Cuba's world high jump record holder Javier Sotomayor. And Ashia Hansen, the world indoor triple jump champion, faces a strong field in Birmingham including Sarka Kasparikova of the Czech Republic and Rodica Mateescu of Romania.

Jayasinghe seeks third win indoors

A SURPRISE late entry to tomorrow's Bupa Indoor Grand Prix meeting in Birmingham was announced yesterday. Not Steve Smith, who has chosen to high jump in Germany because he did not feel he had been offered enough money by the organisers, but the women's world 200 metres silver medalist, Susanthika Jayasinghe.

The Sri Lankan, who will take part in the 60m event at the National Indoor Arena, is at the centre of an ongoing controversy following an adverse finding in a doping test. Jayasinghe was suspended by the Sri Lankan federation last April after a sample showed up traces of the banned steroid nandrolone, but was reinstated last autumn after claiming she had been victimised.

Her career now depends upon the findings of an International Amateur Athletic Federation arbitration panel which will rule on her case later this year. In the meantime, the Sri Lankan has made the most of her freedom to compete - she arrives in Birmingham seeking a hat-trick of victories over 60 metres having won at meetings in Stuttgart and Malmö.

"We have installed an extra lane to accommodate her," said Jon Ridgeon, spokesman for event organisers Fast Track, yesterday.

The information that the organisers have put themselves out in this way for Jayasinghe will hardly thrill Smith, who had hoped to make his competitive comeback after a serious neck injury at Birmingham. The 25-year-old Olympic bronze medalist, whose manager, Vicente Modahl, is still embroiled in seeking up to £500,000 worth of damages from the domestic sport on behalf of his wife, Diane, is due to compete in Balingen tomorrow, having planned to make his comeback at Arnstadt last night.

Tomorrow's event in Birmingham involves three billed world record attempts as Haile Gebrselassie of Ethiopia, Daniel Komen of Kenya and Maria Mutola of Mozambique

compete at 5,000m, 2,000m and 800m respectively.

Gebrselassie and Komen will take to the track within moments of each other, each seeking to break the other's record. Gebrselassie will be paced by compatriot Million Wolde, the world junior 5,000m champion who won so impressively over country at Durham this year.

Between them, Komen and Gebrselassie have set 21 indoor and outdoor world records, so the odds are that one or the other mark will be eclipsed. Komen will be seeking to break the mark established on the same track by the Ethiopian last year.

Elsewhere, the AAA 60m champion, Jason Gardener, faces the former world indoor champion Bruny Surin of Canada, fresh from Wednesday's victory in Malmö over Linford Christie, who runs again in Dortmund today as he continues to enjoy an open-ended break from retirement.

Christie's protégé Darren Campbell, the European 100m champion, will run in Dortmund and Birmingham, as will another member of the training group, Jamie Baugh, who will contest a 400m that was to have included the European 200m champion Dougie Walker, who is currently embroiled in a doping controversy.

Colin Jackson is another entrant to both the German and British event. His 60m hurdles time of 7.39sec in Munich last weekend was his fastest in five years, and he is seeking to improve in Birmingham as he pursues his goal of a first world indoor title.

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Rogers lives up to her potential

THE LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT Michelle Rogers came to the Tournoi de Paris, the toughest invitation tournament of the year, knowing she had to do well if she was to have any chance of selection for this year's European Championships in May and the World Championships in October.

Rogers has the talent to do well at international level as she showed here yesterday, winning her first two fights comfortably.

Spain's Beatriz Martin accrued penalties as she failed to make an impression on Rogers, who eventually settled the matter by holding her down and drawing a submission.

But Rogers was particularly impressive against Heidi Rakels, the experienced Belgian with a string of good medals in a long career when she attacked with style and determination.

This puts the tall Briton into her greatest test yet - a semi-final against Emanuella

Pierantozzi, twice the world champion.

Simone Callendar, the British heavyweight, fought gamely and did well to reach the bronze medal fight. She suffers by a lack of height, and is forced to rely on counters when the taller opponents attack. This tactic brought her two good wins with counter throws, but the canny German, Sandra Koppen, did not play the game, and, switching direction, caught Callendar with a rear throw. In the repêchage, the Londoner beat Spain's Susan Somolinos with two throws.

In the men's division the only Briton to progress past the first round was the middleweight Ryan Birch. His three wins guarantee him a creditable fifth place at least.

Roses pair put Zimbabwe under pressure

MICHAEL VAUGHAN and Andy Flintoff put England in a commanding position on the fourth day of the second A Test at the Queens Club yesterday.

Lancashire's Flintoff hit a lusty 88 and was an able sidekick to his captain as the Yorkshireman who stroked his way to a splendid century.

The pair helped England forge a lead of 470 before Vaughan declared leaving Zimbabwe having to survive a minimum of 145 overs to avoid defeat. At the close of play, they had reached 112 for 3.

The situation at the start of play was ideal for the two overnight batsmen, and Flintoff

providing some rich entertainment as he and Vaughan went along at more than six runs an over to add 153 runs for the fourth wicket.

In one over from Bryan Strang, Flintoff hit a six, carried over the line by long-on, a four which landed on the boundary board, a straight four and a final six on to the terracing way behind long-on.

Vaughan also picked up the

six-hitting habit, reaching his century with two swept shots off the leg-spinner Adam Huckle in the space of three balls.

After Flintoff was well caught by Strang at long-off Vikram Solanki joined Vaughan and, although in distinct contrast to Flintoff, he kept up the tempo. He played some exotic strokes in doing so, with his powerful wrists sending the ball to some unlikely quarters of the ground.

Vaughan's innings ended on 131 when he was caught at long-on after a stay of five hours. He faced 219 balls, hitting 12 fours and three sixes.

Graeme Swann hinted that

more of the same might follow until he was out on the stroke of lunch, leaving Solanki and Chris Read to bat for 17 minutes after the interval before the declaration came.

Zimbabwe needed to preserve their wickets, but in the third over Craig Wishart received a delivery from Jason Lewry which popped off his boot and then, as he went through with the intended drive, saw the ball loop to the left of Mal Loye at mid-on. Loye looked like a goalkeeper making a save in the top left-hand corner as he held a two-handed catch.

Trevor Madondo then put up

the shutters and made a hard-fought 57 before he was caught by Solanki at slip, playing forward to Swann.

Swann then trapped Guy Whittall low, but Steve Gripper was still there at the close with 20 runs chiselled from 61 overs, along with Stuart Carlisle.

Vaughan, while happy with his own form, played tribute to Flintoff's innings. "He makes me look very feeble when I'm at the other end," he said. "He hits it that far and I'm just tricking it to cover for one."

Fourth day England A won 223-6 (131) vs Zimbabwe B 85-5 (107).
England A - 1st innings 383 (M B Loye 133, V S Solanki 85, D L Maddy 64, A R Whittall 4-80, B C Strang 4-107).
Zimbabwe A - 1st innings 223 (A M Gripper 58, D P Viljoen 57, G P Swann 4-52).

ENGLAND A - Second innings (Overnight: 122 for 3)
M B Loye c Viljoen b Strang 131
A Flintoff c Strang b A R Whittall 88
V S Solanki not out 25
G P Swann bow b Strang 7
D L Maddy not out 8
Extras (lb 10) 11
Total (for 6 dews, 79.5 overs) 310
Zimbabwe B - 1st innings (Overnight: 4-243 5-277 6-268
1st test bats D A Coaker, J D Lewry, S J Harrison.
Bowling: Strang 27.6-99-3; Gripper 25-31-4; G J Whittall 10-5-25-0; A R Whittall 22-5-82-3; Huckle 15-3-60-0; Viljoen 2-14-2-0.
Zimbabwe A - Second innings
T R Gripper not out 20
C B Wishart c Loye b Lewry 0
T N Madondo c Solanki b Swann 57
G J Whittall bow b Swann 16
F V Carlisle not out 15
Extras (lb 2) 4
Total (for 3, 67 overs) 112
Fall: 1-1 3-72 5-94.
To bats: D P Viljoen, T C P Gurr, A R Whittall, B C Strang, A M Gripper, A G Huckle.
Bowling: Lewry 11-6-20-1; Harrison 10-5-23-0; Flintoff 7-3-11-0; Swann 16-5-45-2; Coaker 14-9-9-0; Vaughan 8-3-2-0.
Umpires: G R Evans and J Gilmour.

JUDO
BY PHILIP NICKSAN in Paris

Pierantozzi, twice the world champion.

Simone Callendar, the British heavyweight, fought gamely and did well to reach the bronze medal fight. She suffers by a lack of height, and is forced to rely on counters when the taller opponents attack. This tactic brought her two good wins with counter throws, but the canny German, Sandra Koppen, did not play the game, and, switching direction, caught Callendar with a rear throw. In the repêchage, the Londoner beat Spain's Susan Somolinos with two throws.

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approval
Cautious approach followed by Giants



Hounsle in need of points

MOCKE

nation

SKY SPORTS

Decoupage has the edge for Egerton

IF WE still called the apparatus on the mantelpiece a wire-less, the machine pumping out a beat in the corner a gramophone, you could understand it, but the Tote must by now be getting a little bit cross with the credit going to another firm for one of their sponsorships.

It is a long time, back to 1986 in fact, when a fizzy-drink company last supported Newbury's competitive handicap hurdle at St Valentine's time, yet they still get much of the credit.

Many of those on course today, and almost all the odd-timers, will refer to the feature race, the richest handicap hurdle in Europe, as the Schweppes. While their name endures, so does the contest's reputation as one of the most competitive races in the calendar.

This does not stop some

BY RICHARD EDMONDSON

The Game Spirit Chase is headed by Ask Tom, who won this event 12 months ago but then suffered training interruptions on the way to the Queen Mother Champion Chase (festival punters however were just afforded the first part of that information). He will come on for the outing.

One of his rivals is Nipper Reed, who owes his name to the bobby who vainly tried to repatriate Ronnie Biggs from Copacabana beach. The nine-year-old's owner, Graham Piper, is a former law enforcer too, and he could do with the winning percentage to pay his legal team. He was recently arrested as part of a drugs operation by the National Crime Squad. Place money might have to do, as this looks an opportunity for Or Royal (2.00) to break a losing sequence. The grey's trainer, Martin Pipe, sends out Golden Alpha (4.35) in the concluding bumper and the word from Wellington is so strong that he must win.

The West Country support in the opening race will be for Earthover, last term's Foxhovers' Chase winner at the Festival who is among the considerations for the Gold Cup next month. He fell at Newton Abbot on his reappearance and took home with him on his side a haematoma, a blood blister, the size of a pumpkin. The horse has consequently not been given a hard time on the gallops and a better prospect, receiving chunks of weight, is Zaggy Lane (next best 1.30).

Another horse to analyse is Barry Hills' The Fly, fifth in the Derby and third in the St Leger of 1997, and now about to embark on a jumping career. He is entered in the Champion Hurdle and Supreme Novices', and around 20-1 for the latter.

At Haydock, Rough Quest, the 1996 Grand National winner, has his first foray into hunter

chase company. The best bet here is Marlborough (3.15), who has rather more of his career in front of him, including the Royal & Sun Alliance Chase in five weeks' time.

The fences at Prestbury Park may also be the challenge for River Wye and Makounji, who won yesterday at Bangor and Newbury respectively to keep alive hopes of an assault on the Arkle Trophy.

Quel Senor, the French Group Three winner, may also be on parade at Prestbury Park though his winning effort at Newbury yesterday was hardly the stuff of legend. Francois Doumen's horse would not have collected at all had Scarlet Pimpernel not unseated at the last or Tom Paddington broken down. Hold those bets.



Carl Llewellyn and Scarlet Pimpernel part company at the last at Newbury yesterday to hand Quel Senor victory Julian Herbert/Allsport

RICHARD EDMONDSON
Map: Decoupage
(Newbury 2.35)
NB: Zaggy Lane
(Newbury 1.30)

horses going off at silly prices. Indeed, Vicario Di Brilly was 4-7 when he was turned over by Grey Salute in 1989. The one to be shot at this year is Tutchev, who will be expected to run faster than the poet after whom he is named. This is a good horse, perhaps even up to Champion Hurdle standard, but he will start not far from odds-on, which is even closer to absurdity. Even if you are convinced he is going to win, this is a price for the feeble minded.

Much can go wrong in what will be rather more turbulent than a gentleman's stroll round Berkshire. Tutchev's participation means there are some big odds floating around and one which will have a greater chance than his price suggests is the admirable DECOUPAGE (next 2.35), who represents the Charlie Egerton yard responsible for last weekend's big handicap hurdle winner, Theatral.

RESULTS

NEWBURY

Comp: Good to Soft (Good in places)
1.20m (10yo) novice hurdle
1. QUEL SENOR (1) (J. J. Llewellyn) 2.1. 2. TOM PADDINGTON (2) (J. J. Llewellyn) 3.1. 3. THEATRAL (3) (J. J. Llewellyn) 4.1. 4. VICTORIO DI BRILLY (4) (J. J. Llewellyn) 5.1. 5. THEATRAL (5) (J. J. Llewellyn) 6.1. 6. THEATRAL (6) (J. J. Llewellyn) 7.1. 7. THEATRAL (7) (J. J. Llewellyn) 8.1. 8. THEATRAL (8) (J. J. Llewellyn) 9.1. 9. THEATRAL (9) (J. J. Llewellyn) 10.1. 10. THEATRAL (10) (J. J. Llewellyn) 11.1. 11. THEATRAL (11) (J. J. Llewellyn) 12.1. 12. THEATRAL (12) (J. J. Llewellyn) 13.1. 13. THEATRAL (13) (J. J. Llewellyn) 14.1. 14. THEATRAL (14) (J. J. Llewellyn) 15.1. 15. THEATRAL (15) (J. J. Llewellyn) 16.1. 16. THEATRAL (16) (J. J. Llewellyn) 17.1. 17. THEATRAL (17) (J. J. Llewellyn) 18.1. 18. THEATRAL (18) (J. J. Llewellyn) 19.1. 19. THEATRAL (19) (J. J. Llewellyn) 20.1. 20. THEATRAL (20) (J. J. Llewellyn) 21.1. 21. THEATRAL (21) (J. J. Llewellyn) 22.1. 22. THEATRAL (22) (J. J. Llewellyn) 23.1. 23. THEATRAL (23) (J. J. Llewellyn) 24.1. 24. THEATRAL (24) (J. J. 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Henman's nemesis strikes

TENNIS

BY JOHN ROBERTS
in Dubai

JUST WHEN the local expat population was getting to like the idea of Tim Henman coursing through the Dubai Duty Free Open, the British No 1's form dipped in the fourth round. To make matters worse, Henman's defeat, 7-6, 7-5, was at the hands of Jerome Golmard, the French left-hander who ruined his start to last year.

Golmard, who beat Henman in the first round of the 1997 Australian Open - 11-9 in the fifth set of the longest match in the tournament - was again in stubborn mode.

The Frenchman forced the only break point in the first set, which lasted 64 minutes, only to net a forehand off a solid second serve. Henman, steadying his nerves, then managed to take Golmard to deuce in each of the Frenchman's first three service games but was unable to produce the finishing touch.

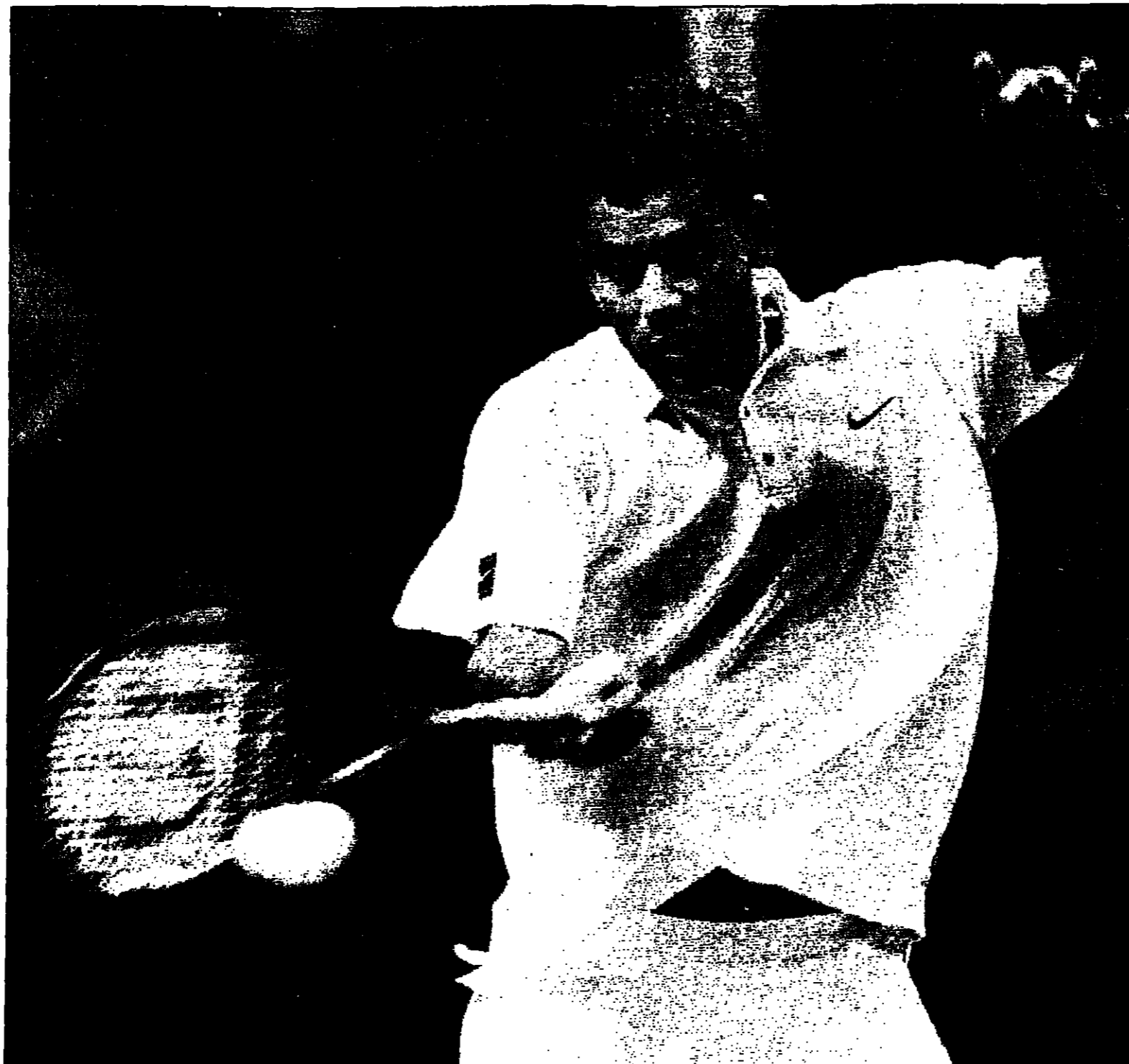
Suspect baseline calls at both ends momentarily unsettled the players in the fourth game, but Golmard continued to resist Henman's attacks and gradually his own serving improved.

A Henman drive was deflected wide by the net cord on the first point of the tie-break, but Golmard then missed a forehand when attempting a backhand for 3-1. Henman temporarily led, 3-2, thanks to his ninth ace, but was then wrong-footed and netted an improvised shot behind his back.

Henman missed with two backhand volleys and netted a backhand drive to give Golmard three set points at 6-3. The Frenchman missed the third, hitting a backhand long, but converted the second with a forehand drive to win the shoot-out, 7-4. Although disappointed with the course the match had taken, Henman continued to probe for an opening. He broke for 3-2 in the second set, but this failed to dent Golmard's confidence, and the Frenchman immediately broke back for 3-3.

Henman raised hopes by breaking for 5-4, courtesy of a Golmard double fault only to lose the advantage after double-faulting himself to 30-40 when serving for the match. Golmard struck again in the 12th game, breaking to love to win after an hour and 55 minutes.

The Australian coach Bob Brett has been the mentor to some volatile characters in his time - Boris Becker, Goran



Pete Sampras makes a forehand return on his way to a 7-5, 6-3 win over the Argentinian Martin Rodriguez at the Sybase Open in San Jose AP

Ivanisevic and Andrei Medvedev - and his latest client, Nicolas Kiefer, is no exception. Kiefer's progress to the semi-finals has been eventful, although Brett would probably choose a different word.

On the way to beating Albert Costa, the Spanish No 6 seed, in the second round, 6-3, 7-6, Kiefer squandered a 4-0 lead in the second set, and Brett walked out of the stadium when the 21-year-old German threw a tantrum.

Yesterday, Brett stayed the course, but was pleased to have brought a coat with him as Kiefer's quarter-final against the Spaniard Francisco Clavet stretched over three hours and five minutes, starting in the afternoon sun and finishing under floodlights, at 7-6, 6-7, 6-2.

Kiefer once again came close to blowing his chances - a situation Clavet must be growing accustomed to after beating Greg Rusedski from 9-6, 0-3 in the second round, Kiefer, who led 5-1 in the opening set, had to scramble to win a tie-break, 9-7, on his eighth set point.

In the second set, Kiefer had four break points on serve at 5-5 and held two match points in the tie-break, which he lost, 6-8. The German reacted by tossing his racket, the balls and his towel, incurring a code violation.

The umpire's intervention concentrated Kiefer's mind. He controlled his temper and the

match after breaking for 3-1, dropping only one point in the concluding two games.

"I can stay calm, and I can talk a lot," Kiefer said. "I know I have to stay calm when you see what happened with Agassi," he added, referring to the American's disqualification for swearing at a linesman in San Jose.

Speaking of characters, tonight Kiefer plays Andrei Ilie, the Romanian-born Australian whose spirited performances

have made him the most popular player here. He advanced by defeating Gustavo Kuerten, the Brazilian former French Open champion, 6-4, 6-4.

Pete Sampras and Mark Philippoussis overpowered their second-round opponents to reach the quarter-finals of the Sybase Open in San Jose. Sampras beat the Argentinian Martin Rodriguez, 7-5, 6-3, while Philippoussis thrashed Dutchman John Van Lottum, 6-2, 6-1.

Wigan look vulnerable to Leeds

RUGBY LEAGUE

BY DAVE HADFIELD

WITH ALL due respect to a tie today between last year's surprise Wembley victors and the side they beat in the semi-finals, the fourth round of the Silk Cut Challenge Cup is dominated by tomorrow's game between the two strongest clubs in the game.

The was a groan that echoed from the Leeds Hilton to Lancaster - where Leeds were on a pre-season training camp - when they came out of the bag with Wigan.

As events have panned out since, however, it could be Wigan who have the more to groan about. They won the one that mattered last year, beating Leeds in the Grand Final, but the loss of Tony Smith with a broken ankle for this tie has exposed some gaps in their squad.

Mark Reber, who has been a bit-part player from the bench for North Sydney for the last few seasons, only flew into Britain on Tuesday. Tomorrow, he will play most of the match at scrum-half, a position he has not filled regularly since his rugby union days.

John Monie's only alternative is to use Jason Robinson to a role he has only occupied on an occasional basis. Neither is an ideal solution and a contest between two closely matched sides could be tilted Leeds' way as a result.

On top of that, there are a few cracks behind the scenes at Central Park - a worrying state of affairs at this stage of the season. Leeds will smell their chance.

They also had good news yesterday when Richie Blackmore and Daryl Powell were both passed fit. That left their coach, Graham Murray, with only the problem of who plays at hooker. He has resolved that by starting with last year's

incumbent, Terry Newton, with the new signing, Lee Jackson, on the bench.

Barrie McDermott, who began only five games last season, gets the vote at prop and will be in direct opposition to his great mate, Terry O'Connor, in what could be, despite their friendship, an explosive collision.

Leeds expect a crowd of over 20,000 for a tie which is not all-ticket and has been protected from the weather by having the under-soil heating turned on since Wednesday.

The meeting today between Sheffield Eagles and Salford would be the highlight of most Cup draws. Salford are still simmering over the way the Eagles came back in last year's semi, but both sides have changed a lot since that day.

Of the two, Salford's surgery has been the more drastic. After a season which never recovered from that defeat they have eight new players making their debuts today.

It is perhaps expecting too much for their new line-up to get immediately against opponents who will fight to keep one hand on the trophy they won against all expectations last May.

The two surviving amateur sides face their moments of truth today, with Featherstone Lions taking on Halifax and Leigh Miners-Rangers, who won at Bramley in the last round, meeting Hull KR.

There will be a handshake of Stanley-Livingstone proportions at The Stoop, where the opposing captains, London's Shaun Edwards and Doncaster's Garry Schofield, are two of the British game's true genuine giants.

McRae hit by double mishap

RALLYING

COLIN McRAE's hopes of victory in the Swedish Rally suffered a massive setback on yesterday's opening day.

McRae badly damaged his left rear wheel when his Ford Focus found a ditch on the sixth special stage.

The Scot was severely hampered over the last few miles of the 13-mile long stage before managing to fit a spare at the end of the timed section.

The problem lost him over a minute and although he still maintained fifth place overall he is now nearly two minutes behind the leader and world champion Tommi Makinen.

That was the second mishap for McRae. He had a new windscreens fitted in the service park after hitting a wooden snow guide on the third stage.

"I'm very happy with things so far," said McRae. "We've made a few minor adjustments at the service park to try to improve the high-speed handling but so far I've been quite cautious on the ice."

Makinen is having a tough time staying ahead of Spain's Carlos Sainz with the gap between the two just 0.2sec.

The Finn, who won the season-opener in Monte Carlo last month, used his Nordic knowledge to win two of the opening four stages of the rally before Sainz closed the gap on the day progressed.

Local driver Thomas Rådström, in a Ford, is in third place 14.4sec adrift with Frenchman Didier Auriol in fourth position, 25.9sec behind.

Makinen seized the lead at the halfway point of the opening leg. He won two of the opening four stages in his Mitsubishi while Sainz was second and Rådström third.

Sainz won the opening stage of the rally on a snowy, gravel surface, but the Finn responded by finishing in first position on stages two and three.

Rådström, competing in his home event which he won in 1994, hit a frozen tree stump on the third stage but recovered to set the second fastest time on the stage.

"We hit a frozen tree stump which damaged the car's cross-member," Rådström said. "I think we were quite fortunate to escape more serious damage."

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Wigan look vulnerable to Leeds



THE SWEEPER

BY CLIVE WHITE AND NICK HARRIS



Everton redefine art of shirt-pulling

YOU HAVE just won the FA Cup final, and if you are Matt Jackson in 1995 better still, because you have just helped make the winning goal for Everton against Manchester United. So how do you celebrate? Drink yourself back and tell him he's got a job for life? Watch the television recording until the tape wears itself out? No. According to Jackson's wife, Julie, you slip on your husband's match shirt, or whatever it is he wears, and make passionate love to him.

"Almost every player went back to the hotel and made love to his wife with her wearing their husband's shirt," Mrs Jackson tells *Match of the Day* magazine in their latest issue. "Everyone came downstairs and said to each other: 'You've just done it in his shirt, haven't you?'"

"That's not true," interrupted Matt. "I know Dave Watson and his wife slept with the FA Cup between them..."

It was not disclosed how the match-winner, Paul Rideout, and his wife spent the night, but it was possibly less of a knockout than it was for them in Florida the other day. While there on holiday, Rideout was trying to attain the strict level of fitness required for a return to the Chinese league, when during an early morning run he was struck by a reversing station wagon.

Whatever damage was done to the car, the rugged Rideout required only a precautionary check-up, but when his wife arrived at the hospital and saw him in a wheelchair she promptly fainted. Thankfully, both Rideouts made a quick recovery.

The former holders could do with some of Rideout's knockout quality in front of goal against Coventry today in their fifth-round tie at Goodison. Another former Evertonian, David Burrows, is confident they won't find it. The former Liverpool defender, now with the Sky Blues, spent just six weeks at Goodison, but it was long enough to help him maintain his record of never finishing up on the losing side in a Merseyside derby - 10 games in all - and he cannot see Coventry losing to them either.

"We achieved an easy 3-0 win over them in November," he said. "It was one of the poorest Everton sides I've ever seen."

BEING A technical man, Howard Wilkinson will have noted how Zone 14 proved to be the undoing of his England team against France this week. Sports scientists at the Sir John Moores' University in Liverpool recently analysed 24 matches played by the four World Cup semi-finalists as well as 12 games involving sides who failed to qualify for the second round. They divided the pitch into 18 separate zones and came to the conclusion that Zone 14, the area immediately outside the 'D', was where the better teams punished

grow crops. Undeterred, United are ploughing on with their £145m investment. "We've had conditions placed upon its use which mean we have to be able to turn it to agricultural use within 24 hours," George Johnstone, the club's Group Property manager, said. "The theory is if there was an invasion or an outbreak of war that is what we would have to do. The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries insists such conditions are imposed." Well, United always were renowned for their home-grown produce.

GEORGE GRAHAM could have told him so after his experiences with Lucas Radebe, but Gérard Houllier would probably have come to the same conclusion as his erstwhile Leeds counterpart - which is that his African is worth all the aggravation. No sooner it seems, has Rigobert Song arrived at Anfield than the Cameroon defender is off to play in the African Nations' Cup against Mozambique, thereby missing Liverpool's crucial away game against Chelsea on 27 February. The Merseysiders had better get used to the idea because there is going to be more of the same. Song, signed for £2.6m from Serie A strugglers Salernitana, has assured Pierre Lechantre, the new Cameroon national coach, that he will be available for all international matches. "I remain an Indomitable Lion!" the former Metz player proudly declared. Meanwhile, the Liverpool defence faces a mauling at Stamford Bridge.

FOOTBALL'S PAYMASTER, Sky TV, may have *corbe blonde* in deciding when Premiership games should be played, but I wonder if they are aware that their decision to move Aston Villa's home match against West Ham United to Good Friday is in contravention of Villa's articles of association - not that they are likely to care. Apparently, back in 1874, when the club was formed by worshippers of Aston's Methodist Wesley Chapel, it was agreed that the club would not stage matches on Sundays or Good Fridays. Perhaps they have got special dispensation from you-know-who... yes, that's right, Rupert Murdoch.

SONG SHEET

Watford hymn of praise to their striker, Michel

"Ngonge, my Lord, Ngonge, Ngonge, my Lord, Ngonge, my Lord, Ngonge, Oh Lord, Ngonge"

Tune: Ram-bo-ye

the opposition. "It's the critical area of the pitch for exploitation of any creative action," Tom Reilly, of the University, said, "and the springboard for true penetration of the defensive line." Brazil's Rivaldo, the Netherlands' Dennis Bergkamp and Croatia's Zvonimir Boban were picked out as major dangers in that area - with France's Zinedine Zidane the most dangerous of all.

WHILE THE bulldozers are never likely to be waiting at the gates at Old Trafford as they have been at the grounds of failing clubs down the year, it's just possible that Manchester United's proposed new training ground could go under the plough. The club's multi-million pound development at Carrington is being built on prime agricultural land, which means that in the event of war it could become Government property and used to

AS YOU WERE



COULD THIS be the first day at school in 1980 for new recruits into the Lawrie McMenemy Tip-Top Academy of Football Management? Could that be McMenemy (front left) gazing adoringly at his latest pupil, Kevin "just back from Hamburg" Keegan and thinking "by heck lad, I'd like a head of hair like that"? Could that be Dave Watson (far right), pondering his future and wondering whether he's made a terrible mistake by enrolling because he somehow can't see himself as a boss in the future? And could that be Chris Nicholl and Alan Ball (left and right of Keegan), smiling nicely for the camera and thinking "We might screw up as club managers in the future, but at least we'll never get ourselves into contention for that most poisoned of chalices, the England job"? Er... no. But, it could be the day Wor Kev signed for the Saints.

THE PRICE IS RIGHT

MANCHESTER UNITED, Arsenal and Liverpool last week - has there ever been an easier treble? Actually, *The Sweeper* was momentarily worried when the Middlesbrough bus turned up at Anfield. It's FA Cup weekend again, and apart from cheering on our portfolio - Arsenal (bankers to beat the Blades), Tottenham, Leeds, and, er... Huddersfield, Barnsley and Fulham

- there are some draw bets to be had in tight ties. Spurs can hold Leeds to a draw at Elland Road, Chelsea can draw with Sheffield Wednesday and Huddersfield may hold Derby to a draw. Fulham are a bit of fun to get a draw with Manchester United tomorrow while Newcastle may be held to a draw by Blackburn. Cagliari, no mugs at home, can hold Lazio to a draw in Channel 4's game which, while not live, will be shown in full later.

THE SWEEPER'S CUP OF GOOD CHEER

LIBERO WAGERS (Four £2 trebles with Stanley): Arsenal to beat Sheffield Utd (2-7); Leeds to draw with Tottenham (9-4); Sheffield Wed to draw with Chelsea (11-5); Huddersfield to draw with Derby (11-5).

SUNDAY ITV MATCH Manchester United v Fulham Draw (E1, 4-1, generally).

SUNDAY SKY MATCH Newcastle v Blackburn Draw (E2, 9-4, William Hill, Ladbrokes & Stanley).

SUNDAY CA ITALIAN JOB Cagliari v Lazio Draw (E2, 2-1, Coral & William Hill).

ORIGINAL BANK £100.

CURRENT KITTY: £146.82!

TODAY'S BETS: £14.17 (including £1.17 tax paid on).

MASCOT ON THE MAT

Name: Cyril the Swan.
Club: Swansea.
Appearance: Bad-tempered, eight-foot goose who has a penchant for running on to the pitch and upsetting members of the Welsh FA.
Crime sheet: Cyril has only been at the club a matter of months, but already has a list of offences longer than his neck. Absending down a floodlight, hissing at a linesman, and attacking people pale into insignificance when you remember the greatest feather in his cap: attracting a swan-man charge from the Welsh FA for staging a swan-man pitch invasion after his side took the lead against West Ham in the FA Cup last month. Cyril is up before the beak (well, the Welsh FA) in the near future for that.



In mitigation, Your Honour: Don't the po-faced Welsh FA have more important things to think about than the surreal Cyril? Surely it's better to leave this particular swan vista alone until he goes as a referee?

Other information: His temperament means he is not always such a nice swan, Cyril. As one club official put it: "He's mad and totally unpredictable. God knows what will happen."

Paul Stevenson

MY TEAM



STEVE RIDER
CHARLTON

BBC sports presenter, often at the helm on Grandstand "I served my time behind goals guarded with a varying degree of efficiency by the likes of Duff, Wakeham and Rose at nondescript Second Division matches - all of which live in the memory - eventually being rewarded with a battling few years in the First Division in the late 80s, and now in the Premiership. Whatever the outcome of the relegation battle I've had the kind of moment that every football follower from SE7 must dream of - to be able to sit in the Grandstand studio on the afternoon of 22 August and tell an audience of five million that "by my calculations, Charlton Athletic are top of the Premiership tonight!"

IN T'NET

Found on the Web: Nationwide League official home page
The highlight of this comprehensive site (which has news and all the other usual items you'd expect from a sponsor's site) is a map of the country covered in dots. Each dot represents a Nationwide club and just by hovering on the dot you are provided with an instant weather report at the venue, as well as the next fixture and the ground capacity. More comprehensive club profiles are available, as is a massive database of every player in country. The only fault with the latter is that it does not appear to have been updated since last August.
<http://www.football.nationwide.co.uk/default.asp? Jude=true>

SEEN BUT NOT BOUGHT

THE KEVIN KEEGAN postcard (50p) is the only item of manager merchandise available from the Fulham club shop, despite his messianic status. Perhaps not wanting to tempt fate, the club has no FA Cup merchandise on sale at all. "But all our yellow stuff [the away colours] is 20 per cent off at the moment," a saleswoman said. Presumably that's because The Cottagers are playing away tomorrow and not because the club doesn't sell much and their wares have become discoloured through neglect.

THEY'RE NOT ALL DENNIS BERGKAMP

Unsung foreign legionnaires No 26
HERMANN HREIDARSSON: The 24-year-old Icelandic international defender played in his home country for IFV, a team based on the small island (pop. 5,000) from which he comes. He was enticed to England by Crystal Palace in the summer of 1997, having been recommended by Bolton's Gudni Bergsson to the then Eagles manager, Steve Coppell. "Hermann is an innocent abroad and long may that continue," Coppell said of his acquisition at the time. The Ice-man, as solid and reliable as any Palace defender in recent years, played 30 times for Palace last season and scored twice. By September last year he was no longer an innocent abroad. He'd cottoned on to the prospects at Selhurst Park were not rosy and swiftly moved to Ron Noades' Third Division Brentford.



Alien invasion of the Rolex-wearing Bosmanoids

NOW WE are at the stage where never a weekend goes by for this observer at least, with at least one more foreign journeyman making his debut, it is hard not to conclude that the Bosman ruling was A Very Bad Thing.

At the beginning of the week, English newspapers picked up on Franck Leboeuf's whinging to LE-quipe about being "club cretin" at Stamford Bridge. The poor petal is underpaid, he reckons, and should be getting at least as much as Chelsea's other World Cup-winning Frenchman, Marcel Desailly. This point is highly debatable given that he is essentially a reserve centre-back for his country, only playing in the World Cup final thanks to Davor Suker, whose despicable play-acting led to Laurent Blanc's dismissal in the semi.

CHRIS MAUME
SPORT ON TV



there is always the impression that he thinks he's a better player than he actually is, and his gripes sat oddly with the portrait of him in *First Edition's* "The Football Foreign Legion" (Carlton, Tuesday). Over film of him shopping with his wife down New Bond Street, he insisted that "I try to have my heart richer than my wallet." No Ferraris for him, he says. "I prefer to buy flats and houses," he says. "It's a better investment."

ton documentary is not generally an occasion for gleeful anticipation, but this one exceeded expectations. I was expecting a blast of *Hello!*, Leboeuf relaxing in his beautiful home with his beautiful wife. It was fairly tough-minded, though, asking whether all these Johnny Foreigners are just over here on Bosman holidays.

West Ham was cited as an example of how not to import foreign talent. Mind you, the conclusion - that the way to do it is to fork out for the best rather than mooch round the "everything must go" department - is blindingly obvious, really.

The low point for the club's manager, Harry Redknapp, was the faith he placed in Florin Raducioiu, who turned out to be the archetypal Bosman tourist, according to Rob Shepherd of the *Express*: "Five years ago he was queuing up for a loaf of

bread. Suddenly the guy comes over with a Rolex on his wrist - two Rolexes he had on the same wrist at one point."

At the other end of the guest-worker continuum is the Hammers' Israeli, Eyal Berkovic, who, despite having his face famously rearranged by John Harrison's fancy footwork, has settled down on and off the pitch. He was born on a kibbutz and possessed "not a word of English" when he came over - even now, when Rio Ferdinand and Frank Lampard get together, he says, "I understand nothing - they speak Cocknik".

So he wasn't keen on Southampton, his first foreign posting, where there is no Jewish community to speak of. The move to London worked though, and he's happy living in Golders Green, a ready-made community that most foreigners

don't have. He's sufficiently at home, on the film's evidence, to indulge in a spot of mock-road-rage banter with bewildered fellow motorists.

So what do incomers have to look forward to when they get here, apart from foul weather and thousands of pounds a week? The likes of Dennis Wise, that's what. whose idea of a joke is teaching the new boys to say "fank you hairy crutch" to waitresses instead of "thank you very much". It's a cheap shot (and an old gag) to observe that his English is worse than some of his foreign team-mates, but I don't usually let that deter me, and I'm not about to start now.

One fruitful direction taken by the film was Crystal Palace's Chinese connection - "tactical decision or cunning move?" The signing of Fan Zhiyi and Sun Jihai more than simply bolstered midfield and defence,

providing an entry into the vast Asian market, with a club shop in Beijing and a television audience of 1.2 billion for a game against Sheffield United described in the *Independent* at the time as "a tedious encounter to which [Fan] contributed little."

Shepherd, who, you gather, isn't enamoured of the alien invasion, is scathing about Palace's motives. "If they can half-play," he says of the Chinese pair, "they put them in the team." Cynical, but probably spot-on.

The highlight of the week was watching Hermann Maier win the downhill at the skiing World Championships in Vail (BBC2, Sunday). He is Jean-Claude Killy, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Ian Botham, James Bond, Michael Schumacher, Indiana Jones and Vinnie Jones, all packed into one imposing frame. When he comes over the top of a

ridge, it's like he's ski-jumping. Gates tend to be flattened. This human avalanche makes skiing compulsive viewing - some achievement.

The highlight of the week wasn't Will Carling's cameo on *Norland Normies*, (CA, Thursday) a docu-soap series about the school for childminders to the rich and famous. The occasion was polo at Cowdray Park, with the gels given quality time with rich kids and, more importantly, the chance to put down markers with the parents.

Carling and his girlfriend were there with their baby, and one of the young things caught their eye. They'd be getting in touch, they said. Sadly, a couple of weeks later, the relationship was all over and nurse would have to look elsewhere. "Another career wrecked by the tabloids," said the acid voice-over.

DON'T TURN ON A SIXPENCE

DON'T BE A SUPERSUB

THE NEW INDEPENDENT
SPORT SECTION
EVERY MONDAY.
DON'T MISS IT.

DON'T BE HANDBAGS AT DAWN

DON'T SCORE

DON'T SWEEP

DON'T BE STEEPED IN TRADITION

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OTES
THE
EEK

FA Cup fifth round: Huddersfield's stylish left-winger has no regrets about leaving his many friends at Old Trafford

Thornley intent on going forward

VIEWING LIFE through Ben Thornley's eyes, two things ought to be obvious. First, he is a right good kisser. Fate, for one, which landed him with a career-threatening injury, and the will-o'-the-wisp frame of Ryan Giggs the other.

But for the shadowy former and elusive latter, Thornley would probably still be playing in the FA Cup fifth round this weekend, but in the red shirt of Manchester United tomorrow rather than the blue and white stripes of Huddersfield against Derby today.

The 25-year-old was one of the highest of Alex Ferguson's favourites, a quick, skilful left-winger, with the broad frame that with the strongest of irony, initially suggested resistance to hurt.

He played in the 1992 and 1993 Youth Cup final teams (one win, one defeat) alongside Giggs, David Beckham, Nicky

Butt, Gary Neville, Paul Scholes, Keith Gillespie and Robbie Savage and made his first team debut as an 18-year-old in 1994.

Then came a cruciate ligament injury and a spiralling and depressing descent, from the likelihood that he would be as regular as you can be in a team that has Giggs' talent to call upon to the realisation that he would have to go elsewhere to get regular football. In some it is a tale that would provoke darker feelings, but if Thornley is bitter he disguises it well.

"Of course I look back and think of only," he said with cheerful machine-gun rapidity and in an accent revealing his Salford roots. "People said Nicky Butt and myself were at the head of the queue and Alex Ferguson told me he thought I'd make it, but you can't live in the past. You have to go forward."

Thornley did that by leaving United. "I had to ask myself: 'Do I want to continue playing in the first team or do I want to get away and play 40 or 50 games a season in front of big crowds?'"

It didn't even have to go to a loss of a coin. It was the more sensible option and it's proved the more fruitful.

Ferguson did not want to release his recuperating winger—he played him against Arsenal and Liverpool in last season's run-in—but a man who has let his own son, Darren, leave Old Trafford was not likely to deny a chance to others and as Thornley had been on loan to Huddersfield in 1996 it was the McAlpine Stadium he chose when Peter Jackson came knocking last summer.

"When I met the manager I could see he had blue and white blood flowing through his body," Thornley said. "He's a young guy who loves the club

and his enthusiasm on the touchline is there for everyone to see. Also, it was a plus that I knew a lot of the lads. They helped me settle in."

"Huddersfield's a homely club, but you can see it's going places if we have the right playing staff and if we've got the business people in the big black chairs helping us out."

He has left United but it is unlikely to leave him. Gary Neville, who is engaged to Thornley's sister Hannah, rang him just before this interview to let him know he had been included out of England squad, while the Neville family and Beckham have visited the McAlpine to watch him play.

"I still see Gary a lot," he said. "I don't see Beck and Ryan as much as I used to but I keep in touch. Any of the lads I grew up with, Scholes, Nicky Butt, I'd gladly spend the night talking away old times."

The Ryan of above is, of course, Giggs and it is one of the great paradoxes in Thornley's life that he weighed up the wealth of young central midfield talent at Old Trafford in the late Eighties and quickly switched to the flank which put him in direct competition with the most natural talent in the land.

Only Giggs' versatility allowed Thornley to play in the winning 1992 Youth Cup final team and such was the talent at Old Trafford in those days it was still at the expense of a current Welsh international. "Giggs played up front, leaving me to my own devices on the left," Thornley said.

"I was worried I'd miss out because Ryan only played in the two legs of the final and one match in the semi, but Robbie Savage was the one who had to drop out. I felt for him, it must have been very hard. Heartbreaking."

Surely, putting friendship aside, there must have been times when he hated the sight of the young Welshman casting spells on his own left-wing territory? "Not at all," he replied with a laugh. "Better players than me are going to play second fiddle to Giggs."

"On his day, and the prime example was the 3-2 win over Juventus last season, he's the best around. Believe it or not he'd not trained for two and half weeks before that game and he was out of this world."

"I've never got sick of him. I love him to pieces. I've known him for 11 years and he's a great lad. He's never let any of the fame go to his head. He's careful how he conducts himself off the pitch and he's a credit to Manchester United. I hope they keep him there for as long as possible because he'll



Ben Thornley, the former Manchester United youngster, now plying his trade at Huddersfield

Allsport



Manchester United's 1992 youth team. Back row (left to right): Raphael Burke, Gary Neville, Simon Davis, John O'Kane, Andy Noone, Nicky Butt, Ben Thornley. Front row: Robbie Savage, David Beckham, George Switzer, Keith Gillespie, Paul Scholes, Chris Casper

Even before Manchester United won the FA Youth Cup in 1992 rumours were circulating in football that this was a crop to compare with the 'Busby' Babes, who won the first competition in 1953.

United's first team had just been pipped of the title by Leeds making it 25 seasons of sorrow since the championship had been won and it was in search of consolation that 1400 went to Old Trafford to watch the second leg of the final against Crystal Palace.

They got it via a 3-2 victory (and an aggregate) and with it an invitation to the birth of 'The Class of '92' was last time.

Normally a youth side will yield one first-team player, two if the club is lucky, but of the 21 who started for United on May 15 1992, four became England internationals — Ryan Giggs, David Beckham, Gary Neville and Nicky Butt — while the two substitutes, Keith Gillespie (now Blackburn) and Robbie Savage (Leicester), have been capped by Northern Ireland and Wales respectively.

Of the others, Ben Thornley transferred to Huddersfield, Chris Casper (Reading), Kevin Pilkington (Port Vale), John O'Kane (Everton), Simon Davies (Luton) and Colin McKee (Kilmarnock) made it to the first team and only fullback

George Switzer who was given a free transfer to Darlington at the end of the 1992-3 season and is now playing in non-League football in the Manchester area, was never picked by Alex Ferguson. Two other members of the youth team squad, Raphael Burke and Andy Noone, were released.

Virtually all the team of '92 were eligible for the Youth Cup the following year and, surprisingly, they failed to win it even though another two future England internationals, Paul Scholes and Phil Neville, played in the final. Leeds won 4-1 on aggregate before crowds of 30,562 at Old Trafford and 31,037 at Elland Road.

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'Leary confronts his mentor

WHILE RECENT events have underlined the high profile accorded to football managers, the FA Cup has remained the preserve of the players, from the amateurs, amateurs and professionals, who have been the mainstay of the competition since its inception in 1871.

It was a day of mixed memories for Andy Cole. Under Keegan he established his reputation with Newcastle but, earlier in his career, he had an unhappy loan period with

but Fulham, one of two teams left in the competition whose name is not engraved on the Cup, have beaten Southampton and Aston Villa. They lead the Second Division and, having spent more than £10m on players, have a pedigree way above their status.

For Kit Symons, their former Manchester City defender, it will be a chance to put right an injustice from 1966 when City, then still in the Premiership, were knocked out of the Cup at this stage by United through an extremely dubious penalty. United went on to win the trophy.

It will be a day of mixed memories for Andy Cole. Under Keegan he established his reputation with Newcastle but, earlier in his career, he had an unhappy loan period with

Fulham, scoring four times in 15 games. "I had a terrible time," he said. "I couldn't put the ball in the net no matter what I did."

At Highbury today Sheffield United are hoping to repeat their shock defeat of Arsenal in the Cup three years ago, since when the Gunners have lost once in 14 FA Cup ties. Bizarrely, the holders have not won a tie at Highbury for six years. United, who reached the semi-final last year, will be backed by 5,300 travelling fans, most bearing balloons provided by the club's board of directors — an appropriate gift, given the amount of hot air in most boardrooms.

Arsenal will be without the suspended Emmanuel Petit plus Lee Dixon, Martin Keown and Tony Adams, all of whom were injured during Wednesday's international between England and France, which

featured seven of their players. With others, including Dennis Bergkamp, having been involved in internationals elsewhere in Europe, the Gunners could be leg-weary. They may also have an eye on next week's critical trip to Old Trafford.

At the McAlpine Stadium, Derby, having won at Plymouth and Swansea, have to negotiate another potential banana skin in Huddersfield. Surprisingly the two sides have never met in the FA Cup; less unexpectedly their solitary triumphs date back to 1922 and 1946 respectively.

If the giant-killing attempts fail, at least one non-Premiership side will be in the sixth round: the winner of Barnsley's tie with Bristol Rovers. Second Division Rovers, the only team left in the competition not to have played in a final, have only reached the sixth round twice,

in 1951 and 1958. Their attack will be led by Jason Roberts, the competition's equal leading scorer with six goals and a nephew of Cyrille Regis.

Barnsley, who knocked out Manchester United at this stage last season, will fancy their chances against a Rovers side which does not travel well and reached this stage by beating three Third Division clubs and a non-league side.

Besides the tie at Leeds there are three other all-Premiership matches. At Hillsborough, current form suggests the one Italian of Sheffield Wednesday, Benito Carbone, could upset Chelsea's trio, especially if the Blues also suffer a hangover from mid-week international action.

At Goodison Everton seek their fifth home goal of the season against a Coventry side who tend to do well against them.

Tomorrow at Ewood Park, Blackburn Rovers and Newcastle United renew acquaintance. They already met in the Worthington Cup this season, Blackburn winning on penalties, and the match should feature a quartet of players who have traded places — Alan Shearer and Shay Given of Newcastle, and Darren Peacock and Keith Gillespie of Rovers.

The two sides have something else in common too, an FA Cup history of faded grandeur. Each have won six times but Newcastle have not done so since 1955 while Blackburn have to look back to 1928. Both will be dreaming this morning but one, at least, will have to wait a little longer.

A frustrating mixture of despair and elation

WHEN PAOLO DI CANIO signed for West Ham, all those years of loyal support had been rewarded. The time had come to break out of the bubbly, Harry Redknapp had gone Italian. Our childhood dreams had come true. Yeah, right.

I first started supporting the Hammers when football programmes were 10p and Booney M were cultural icons. Supporting them — like loving dodgy bands — is a way of life, an emotional attachment. Suffering, elation, despair and pessimism are part of East End vocabulary, and if trophies rewarded perennial underachievement then there's little we wouldn't have won.

Still, the attachment is genetic — my uncle and grandfather had been masochists before me — and despite the fact that the Boleyn Ground terraces were like cold graveyards or amusement arcades, there were morsels of comfort. A 2-0 defeat by Orient on Boxing Day always seemed to be followed up by a 1-0 cup victory against Aston Villa. That's the way it was in those days.

The departure of Ron Greenwood as manager in 1977 threatened years of barrenness and mediocrity. The following season we were relegated to the old Second Division and I was heartbroken. I was in tears for days. I wrote a jazz song called "The dog's dead, my woman's gone and the house is falling down, but

FAN'S EYE VIEW

WEST HAM

BY JOE MORRIS

I didn't care until this happened. I didn't actually, but you can see my point. After 20 or so glorious years as top dogs in the East End, relegation was unthinkable. Ahead lay months visiting football hotbeds like Grimsby, Bristol Rovers and Watford. And to think this was club who had provided the backbone of England's 1966 World Cup team.

Strangely, my best memories can be still traced to those halcyon days of the late Seventies. Alan Devonshire, that darting and dashing mid-fielder who ran and ran. And then ran some more. Now there was a player. And Frank Lampard, an overlapping full-back with thighs like tree trunks. Not that I looked at his thighs a lot, but you notice these things. And Tony Cottie and Frank McAvennie, and, and, and then there was Trevor.

Oh, Trevor. Idolised and drooled over as if he were a Bay City Roller. All pin-stripe elegance and gentility. Trevor was everything I looked for in a sportsman. You wouldn't find Trevor pushing a referee with

a double-handed shove. Oh no. He shaped our world, he was the centre of our universe.

In that 1980 FA Cup final victory against Arsenal, we, the unfancied Second Division boys, beat the mighty Arsenal. The proletariat had got one over the bourgeoisie. Brookings' headed Cup final winner was happiness incarnate on a hot May afternoon. I felt as though I'd just listened to a heavenly piece of jazz, climbed a mountain and run a marathon. It was drama, theatre and sheer poetry.

Another memorable moment was a match against Ipswich. It was the season we finished in our highest position (third). With Liverpool and Everton also in the running, we finished that last game with a 2-1 victory over the Suffolk country bumptkins. There was sheer jubilation. Supporters flooded onto the pitch, breaking through the barriers and running straight for the centre circle. We might have finished below two others, but when the manager John Lyall, and players gathered in the directors' box, you'd have thought West Ham were world champions.

So what does the future hold? Is the future at Upton Park all about Di Canio, Marc Vivien Foe, Ryal Berkovic or even the return of Marco Boogers from his caravan in the Netherlands? I suppose it is, and we'll get to used to it. Any old Iron and all that.

Play-acting on Fifa agenda

FIFA WILL address a proposal to punish play-acting anywhere on the field with a yellow card when it meets next week world football's governing body said yesterday.

Virtual publicity will also be on the agenda when the International Board meets 20 Feb near Cardiff.

"These initiatives reflect Fifa's resolve to keep the field free of advertising and to crack down on cheating," Fifa said in a statement.

Faking injuries on the field would be deemed unsporting behaviour and bring a yellow

card under the proposal being discussed.

The board meeting will also discuss a possible experiment with using two referees, the introduction of "goal-line technology" and extending the responsibilities of the fourth official.

Birmingham are hoping to sign the Sheffield Wednesday central defender, Jon Newson, for a fee of about £1.6m as a replacement for their captain, Gary Ablett, who will be out of action until Christmas with a knee ligament injury.

Leicester City Council plan-

ning officers have recommended that Leicester's plans to move into a 40,000 all-seater stadium at Bede Island South be turned down because it contains retail outlets.

Chelsea are to take the top 10in to 12in off the Stamford Bridge pitch immediately after the game against Blackburn next Wednesday in an attempt to solve the problem of water retention on the field, which has caused the pitch to be "sticky" underfoot. Chelsea players have complained that the surface is inhibiting their ability to pass the ball smartly on the ground.

Barnsley v
Bristol Rovers

Everton v
Coventry City

Huddersfield v
Derby County

Guide to the FA Cup and Premiership

MATCH OF THE WEEKEND (FA CUP FIFTH ROUND, SUNDAY 2.0)



Manchester United v Fulham



ALEX FERGUSON could deploy Ole Gunnar Solskjaer, Andy Cole (left) and Dwight Yorke in a three-pronged attack tomorrow as his Premiership leaders take on Kevin Keegan's Second Division pace-setters.

Although Ferguson may choose to use all three front men at the same - following their eight-goal haul last week against Nottingham Forest - Fulham's goalkeeper, Mark Taylor, maintains that he does not feel like a condemned man who is about to be had for a late breakfast. "Those guys are on fire at the moment," said Taylor.

"The goals tally tells you that they are the best around and between the three of them, they have by far scored the most goals in the Premiership. But they don't scare us, and

BY NICK HARRIS

we're not going to be frightened off by that. I'm just going to try to play my normal game and enjoy the whole day."

Yorke, Cole and Solskjaer have netted 53 goals between them this season, and it will be Taylor who will stand as the last line in the Cottagers' defence and try to stop them adding to that tally. Ferguson has hinted he will play Solskjaer, who despite his bit-part role this season has scored 15 goals, but United will be without the suspended Roy Keane and Paul Scholes. "So they're putting out a weak side," Taylor joked yesterday. "Is there such a thing with United considering the incredible strength in depth they've got?"

At least the Fulham keeper should not be overawed by playing in front of a full house at Old Trafford. The Northern Ireland B international kept goal at the Theatre of Dreams two years ago during his brief stint in the Premiership with Southampton. He performed well that day and made a fine save from Eric Cantona before the Frenchman beat him to secure a 2-1 win for United.

"That's a game which is definitely lodged in the memory banks," said the 27-year-old. "It was an unbelievable atmosphere playing in front of 56,000 people. We lost to a late goal from Eric Cantona and although the result went against us, it was still a wonderful experience. I'm really looking forward to going back because for me, playing on grounds like

that helps bring out the best in me." Fulham will be without their striker Geoff Horsfield, who is suspended, so Barry Hayles is likely to partner Paul Peschisolidi (right) up front. The Belgian international Philippe Albert, on loan from Newcastle, is ineligible tomorrow but Neil Smith is available after a ban.

United's Jaap Stam is available despite doubts over a hamstring problem. Gary Neville is still feeling the effects of an injured knee but is in the squad and should play. MANCHESTER UNITED (from): Solskjaer, Van der Grint, G. Neville, Irwin, Johnson, Stam, Beckham, Butt, Cole, F. Neville, Curran, Blomqvist, Yorke, Solskjaer, Berg, Brown, May. FULHAM (from): Taylor, Arundell, Brewster, Symons, Coleman, Morgan, Lillibridge, Finnan, Hayward, Smith, Collins, Brazier, Nelson, Hayles, Peschisolidi, Lehmann, Salako. Suspensions: Manchester United: Scholes, Keane. Fulham: Horsfield. Referee: J. Winter (Stockton-on-Tees).

TODAY'S FA CUP FIFTH ROUND MATCHES

Arsenal v Sheffield United

ARSENAL HAVE paid a heavy price for having so many players involved in Wednesday's international at Wembley. Tony Adams will be rested even though a scan has dispelled fears that he may have broken his nose in the game against France, while Martin Keown is out for three weeks after pulling a hamstring. Lee Dixon, the third Gunner in England's back line, was carried off with concussion and is still troubled by a neck injury.

Granados Pelti starts a three-match ban and with Matthew Upson doubtful with a groin injury the holders could have Gilles Grimandi and Steve Bould in central defence. Nigerian striker Nwankwo Kanu may be on the bench after receiving his work permit. Nelson Vivas looks set to replace Dixon at right-back with Stephen Hughes taking over from Petit in midfield. Fredrik Ljungberg (ankle) and Luis Boa Morte (knee) are still out.

Sheffield United have Wayne Quinn back from suspension. Midfield player Curtis Woodhouse, Paul Devlin and David Holdsworth should be given the all-clear after undergoing treatment for minor knocks, but there is a doubt over Roger Nelsen who will undergo a fitness test on a hamstring problem.

ARSENAL (from): Seaman, Vivas, Grimandi, Bould, Upson, Whitehurst, Parlour, Hargreaves, Hughes, Charnock, Bergkamp, Arundell, Kanu, Olsson, Garcia, Mannings. SHEFFIELD UNITED (from): Kelly, Quinn, Derry, Sandford, Holdsworth, Marcello, Woodhouse, Twiss, Devlin, Stuart, Nelsen, Morris, Ford, Anderson, Henry, Tracey. Suspensions: Arsenal: Pelti. Referee: P. Jones (Loughborough).

Barnsley v Bristol Rovers

BARNSLEY STRIKER Mike Sheron could make his debut after finally recovering from a hamstring injury following his £1m move from Queen's Park Rangers last month. The availability of the much-travelled Sheron will be especially welcome as fellow forward Mike Turner is Cup-tied and former Wolves striker Don Goodman is still struggling with his own hamstring problem.

Adie Moses and Darren Sheridan both return from one-match bans, with the duo likely to be in the starting line-up and on the bench respectively. Craig Hignett should be fit despite a calf injury, while Matt Appleby could come into contention despite a thigh strain which forced him out of last week's 2-2 draw with Crewe.

The Bristol Rovers player-manager, Ian Holloway, will make a late decision over his side. Mike Troughton could get the nod to line up at centre-back for the Second Division side, alongside Steve Foster with Andy Thomson Cup-tied. In midfield, Josh Low, Stephane Leon and Michael Meaker are vying for one place.

BARNSLEY (from): T. Bullock, Eaden, Moses, De Zeeuw, Tinkler, Jones, Appleby, Richardson, Morgan, McCare, Hignett, Sheridan, M. Bullock, Dyer, Hendrie, Goodman, Marcello, Rose, Monaghan, Sheron, Leese. BRISTOL ROVERS (from): Jones, Pritchard, Chailis, Priest, Troughton, Foster, Holloway, Low, Lee, Pearce, Meaker, Carter, Roberts, Leon. Suspensions: None. Referee: A. Wilkie (Chester-le-Street).

Everton v Coventry City

THE RETURN of Danny Cadamarteri after suspension gives Everton manager Walter Smith the rare luxury of picking from three strikers. Cadamarteri, 18-year-old Francis Jeffers who made his full debut at Derby last Sunday, and Ibrahim Bakayoko will all be considered.

In defence Marco Materazzi is still suspended and Slaven Bilic and Alex Cleland are long-term injury victims. David Unsworth has been having intensive treatment on a pulled calf muscle that forced him off at half-time in the 2-1 defeat at Derby.

If Unsworth is ruled out, Craig Short could be pushed back into action after seven weeks out with a torn calf although he is not considered fully fit yet. Smith is likely to revert to a 4-2-4 formation, with veteran Dave Watson lining up alongside Richard Dunne and Michael Ball.

George Boateng and David Burrows return to Coventry's team after one-match suspensions and new Bosnian signing Mo Konjic is set to make his full debut following his £2m transfer from Monaco. Paul Williams is out with a hamstring injury.

EVERTON (from): Myhre, Ward, Unsworth, Short, Watson, Dunne, Ball, Dacourt, Hutchinson, Gamble, Cadamarteri, Jeffers, Bakayoko, Simonson, Belling, Jones. COVENTRY CITY (from): Hedderley, Nissen, Shaw, Kane, Burrows, Boateng, McAleer, Solovjev, Froggatt, Huckerby, Whelan, Breen, Telfer, Aloisi, Giacchini, Edworthy, Quinn, Gough. Suspensions: Everton: Materazzi. Coventry: None. Referee: U. Rennie (Sheffield).

Huddersfield v Derby County

HUDDERSFIELD TOWN'S Welsh international defender Steve Jenkins is out after picking up an ankle injury during last Saturday's defeat at Port Vale which also forced him of the midweek B international against Northern Ireland. Sam Collins (shin splints) is also out, while Grant Johnson is doubtful with a groin problem, with the duo both having missed the Vale Park clash. With a lengthy list of long-term injured, manager Peter Jackson adds Jon Dyson to the squad after a comeback in the reserves this week following a lengthy lay-off with an Achilles problem.

Dean Sturridge is on course to play for Derby after missing two matches with a hamstring pull but fellow striker Paulo Wanchope is definitely out, also with a hamstring injury. If Sturridge is passed fit, he will partner Dean Burton, who scored for Jamaica in midweek following his double against Everton last Sunday. German defender Stefan Schnoor is available after serving a one-match ban and midfielder Lars Bohinen has recovered from flu and is back in the squad.

HUDDERSFIELD TOWN (from): Warren, Edwards, Johnson, Gray, Bennett, Phillips, Stewart, Allison, Thornley, Barnes, Heyes, Facey, Henry, Dyson, Senior, Baldry, Edworthy. DERBY COUNTY (from): Hout, Prior, Carbanan, Simac, Lawren, Carley, Evans, Morgan, Baines, Stranahan, Burton, Harper, Powell, Hunt, Schnoor, Bohinen, Elliott, Knight. Suspensions: None. Referee: G. Willard (Worthing).

And statistics Are fans still up for the Cup?

AFTER YEARS in the doldrums, the FA Cup's appeal is returning, for smaller sides at least. The dwindling support for League football in the Seventies was mirrored in the Cup but until now the upturn in League support in the Nineties - especially in the Premiership - was not reflected in the Cup. Then, last season, average gates rose from 12,200 to 13,200 and that increase has been well maintained this year. Proof of enduring Cup magic has been at smaller clubs - such as Port Vale, Plymouth and Bristol Rovers, which have seen their largest gates of the season for Cup games - but some evidence of footy fatigue can be seen elsewhere, notably at Nottingham Forest, Tottenham and Everton, where Cup games drew the lowest gates of the season.

On the pitch in recent years, performances have shown - perhaps against expectation - that League clubs have not unduly affected performances in the Cup. Of the six League and Cup Doubles done this century, three have come since the start of the Premiership. Look at the form of top flight teams in the League and Cup and Manchester United top both tables by a street. Chelsea and Wimbledon have found Cup success in excess of their League form while both Liverpool and Blackburn have disappointed in the Cup.

And the minnows? Five Nationwide clubs enter the fifth round along with 11 Premiership clubs. One minnow, at least, must survive, with Barnsley playing Bristol Rovers. Huddersfield (at home to Derby), Sheffield United (at Arsenal) and Fulham (at Manchester United) have the chance of giant-killing glory. Four Premiership clubs - Southampton, Nottingham Forest and West Ham in the third round and Aston Villa in the fourth round - have already fallen to Nationwide opposition. Fulham are going for their giant-killing hat-trick at the most difficult venue of all. Sheffield United have a recent pedigree: two years ago in the third round, having drawn at Highbury, they defeated the Gunners by a single goal in the Bramall Lane replay, and last year they progressed to the semi-final at the expense of Coventry. Huddersfield have to look much further back for their moment of glory. Twice in the last three seasons they have been knocked out by Wimbledon, but on 7 January 1984 they beat QPR - then riding high in the top flight - 2-1 at home.

Cup record table 1992-99*

	Played	Pts	Position on League performance **
1) Manchester United	32	75	(1)
2) Chelsea	31	62	(6)
3) Wimbledon	25	60	(9)
4) Arsenal	29	57	(3)
5) Leeds	28	50	(7)
6) Tottenham	27	49	(10)
7) Sheffield Wed	25	45	(11)
8) Newcastle	22	41	(8)
9) Aston Villa	23	40	(5)
10) Liverpool	23	36	(2)
11) Everton	19	34	(12)
12) Blackburn	21	33	(4)
13) Coventry	20	32	(13)
14) West Ham	21	31	(15)
15) Man City	16	28	(18)
16) Nottingham Forest	17	28	(23)
19) Leicester	11	19	(21)
20) Southampton	16	19	(14)
21) Derby	8	18	(22)
22) Ipswich	10	17	(24)
23) Oldham	9	15	(26)
24) QPR	9	15	(17)
25) Sheffield United	8	13	(25)
26) Norwich	8	13	(19)
27) Barnley	6	11	(29)
28) Bolton	3	3	(27)
29) Sunderland	2	1	(30)
30) Swindon	2	1	(30)
31) Charlton	1	0	(31)

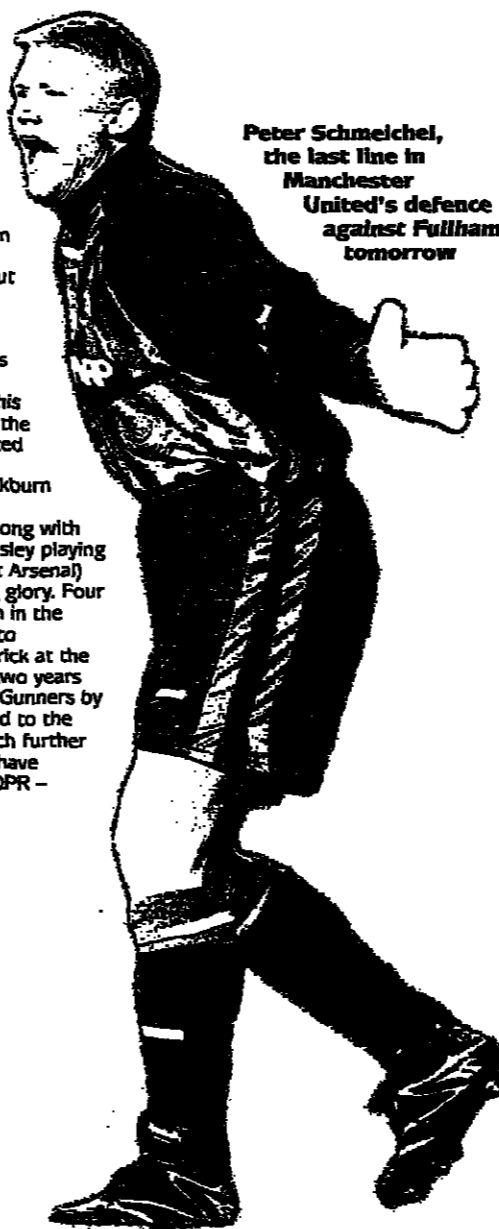
*Cup position calculated on absolute number of points where a win is worth three points and a draw one point.
**League position calculated on absolute number of points accumulated in the Premiership between the start of the 1992-93 season and now. For example, Manchester United are top with 548 points from 265 games, West Ham are 15th with 284 points from 222 games and Charlton are 31st with 20 points from 24 games.

Cup magic!

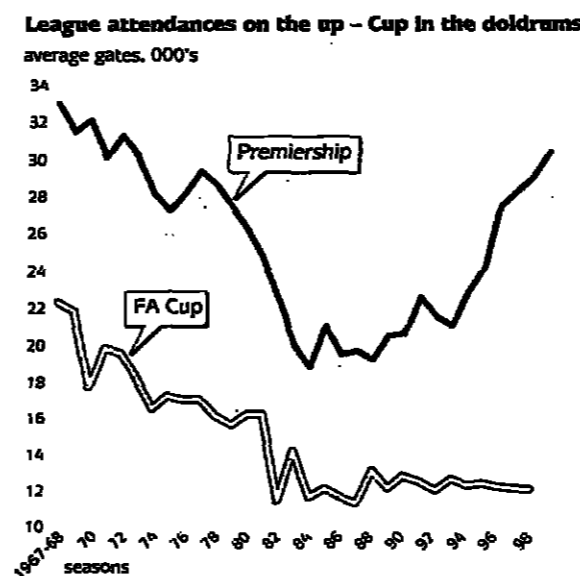
Date	Game	Gate	Highest League gate	'Cup magic' factor
3 Jan	Port Vale v Liverpool	16,557	10,465	+6.092
4 Jan	Preston v Arsenal	21,099	15,888	+5.211
2 Jan	Plymouth v Derby	16,730	11,936	+4.794
23 Jan	Swansea v Derby	11,383	7,757	+3.626
2 Jan	Bristol City v Everton	19,608	16,257	+3.351
13 Jan	Fulham v Southampton	17,448	14,284	+3.164
2 Jan	Lincoln v Sunderland	10,408	7,338	+3.070
2 Jan	Barnsley v West Brom	10,881	8,863	+2.018
23 Jan	Portsmouth v Leeds	16,864	17,022	+1.842
23 Jan	Bristol Rovers v L. Orient	9,274	7,529	+1.745

Cup tragic!

Date	Game	Gate	Lowest	Shortfall League gate	Nationwide sides reaching the FA Cup fifth round 1992-99
2 Jan	N Forest v Portsmouth	10,092	21,362	-11,270	1992-93 6
2 Jan	Blackburn v Charlton	16,631	22,544	-5,913	1993-94 9
19 Jan	Barnsley v Swindon	10,510	15,115	-4,605	1994-95 3
2 Feb	Tottenham v Wimbledon	24,049	28,338	-4,289	1995-96 6
2 Jan	Coventry v Macclesfield	14,197	18,006	-1,809	1996-97 7
2 Jan	Southampton v Fulham	12,549	14,354	-1,805	1997-98 5
23 Jan	Everton v Ipswich	28,854	30,357	-1,503	1998-99 5
3 Jan	Sheff Wed v Norwich	18,737	19,321	-584	
2 Jan	Wimbledon v Man City	11,226	11,717	-491	
2 Jan	Crewe v Oxford	4,207	4,489	-282	



Peter Schmeichel, the last line in Manchester United's defence against Fulham tomorrow



20th Century League and Cup Doubles

Season	Team
1960-1961	Tottenham
1970-1971	Arsenal
1986-1986	Liverpool
1993-1994	Manchester United
1995-1996	Manchester United
1998-1999	Arsenal

Statistics: Brian Sears/Nick Harris



Leeds United v Tottenham



LEEDS UNITED manager David O'Leary faces further injury headaches. He is without long-term absentees Gary Kelly, Robert Molenar, Martin Hiden and David Batty, and midfielders Bruno Ribeiro (toe) and Stephen McPhail (knee) are still out of action. Of major concern are ankle injuries to David Hopkin and Lee Bowyer, while Jonathon Woodgate has not trained all week because of a back problem.

Teenage striker Alan Smith is fit after bruising an instep and will be partnered up front by Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink who missed last week's defeat by Newcastle through suspension.

Tottenham captain Sol Campbell, who pulled out of England's midweek friendly against France, is doubtful, after missing training this week with a stomach virus. But the centre-back is in a squad of 20 for the game along with Frenchman David Ginola, who looks to have made a complete recovery from hamstring trouble which has kept him out of the last three matches.

Ginola, however, could be kept back for the Worthington semi-final second leg at Wimbledon next Tuesday - the trophy which manager George Graham admits is his priority this season. "I've worked hard with the fitness trainer for three days this week and

everything seems fine now," said Ginola, who damaged the hamstring in the goalless first leg of the Worthington semi 17 days ago. Since then he has had to report for day-long treatment every weekday morning.

Meanwhile Ramon Vega and Colin Calderwood are on standby for Campbell. Tim Sherwood, Tottenham's £4m signing from Blackburn, looks set for his full debut. LEEDS UNITED (from): Martin, Haslam, Radebe, Whitham, Hargreaves, Wetherby, Hasselbaink, Bowyer, Hopkin, Grassie, Halls, Kendall, Harte, Woodgate, Smith, Jones, Keane, Robinson. TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR (from): Walker, Carr, Vago, Young, Campbell, Calderwood, Edinburg, Torricci, Fox, Anderson, Freund, Nielsen, Sherwood, Silva, Ginola, Dominguez, Armstrong, Ferdinand, Iversen, Boardman. Suspensions: None. Referee: N. Barry (Scunthorpe).



Sheff Wed v Chelsea



SHEFFIELD WEDNESDAY left-back Andy Hinchcliffe is undergoing extensive treatment after twisting his knee in training with England earlier this week, although a scan has ruled out the need for surgery.

Goalkeeper Kevin Pressman will begin re-staking his claim for the No 1 shirt as Czech international Pavel Srnec begins a three-match ban following his dismissal for serious foul play in the recent defeat by Derby.

Gianluca Vialli is set to recall himself for Chelsea and is likely to rest young Finnish striker Mikael Forssell. Defenders Michael Duberry and Albert Ferrer are both back in contention after recovering from injuries.

Vialli, who celebrated his first anniversary as Chelsea player-manager this week, said of the FA Cup yesterday: "I like the passion of the competition and what it means to players and supporters alike. The atmosphere is special and it is great how the less famous teams try to upset the famous ones. All the foreign players at Chelsea want to do well in the Cup and go as far as possible in it."

SHEFFIELD WEDNESDAY (from): Pressman, Arderton, Jork, Newcombe, Walker, Carbone, Booth, Sanetti, Coban, Humphries, Ensoe, Stefanovic, Cokes, Hinchcliffe, Emerson, Rudi, Alexanderson, Sonnet, Currie. CHELSEA (from): De Gea, Fener, Myers, Drobny, Lambourde, Desailly, Babayaro, Lobotsev, Le Saou, Petrescu, Terry, Di Matteo, Nicholas, Morris, Newton, Woe, Gold-Sussex, Vialli, Foster, Huddlestone, Haddock. Suspensions: Sheff Wednesday: Srnec. Referee: S. Dunn (Bristol).

TOMORROW'S FA CUP (4.0)



Newcastle v Blackburn



ALAN SHEARER returns to action for Newcastle against his old club. The England captain is back after suspension, but Greek defender Nikos Dabizas must sit out a second game. Frenchman Didier Drogba returns from a hamstring injury, probably at the expense of Warren Barton, and club captain Rob Lee is in the squad after missing eight games with an Achilles injury.

Swiss defender Stephane Henchoz is a major doubt for Blackburn Rovers. Henchoz, who was suspended for last Saturday's Premiership win at Aston Villa, Blackburn's first away from home, returned this week from international duty with a thigh strain and will need a late check. Blackburn will be missing suspended winger Jason Wilcox and the Cup-tied duo Jason McAteer and Matt Jansen.

Manager Brian Kidd will give fitness tests today to Irish defender Jeff Kenna (ankle) and Scottish midfielder Billy McKinlay (groin) but winger Keith Gillespie has declared himself fit to return against his former club. He scored the goal which beat Sunderland in the previous round but missed the win at Villa Park with an ankle problem.

NEWCASTLE UNITED (from): Glen, Harper, Griffin, Charvet, Howey, Drogba, Shearer, Hamann, Solano, Glass, Shearer, Kerslake, Lee, Barton, Salu, Anderson, Georgiadis, Brady, Pearce, Dalglish. BLACKBURN ROVERS (from): Flan, Davidson, Kenna, Henchoz, Peacock, Bromes, Dunn, Duff, McKinlay, Sutton, Ward, Davies, Dally, Marcolin, Flowers, Gillespie. Suspensions: Newcastle: Dabizas. Blackburn: Wilcox. Referee: D. Gallagher (Barbary).

TODAY'S FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP



Charlton v Liverpool



ALAN CURBISHLEY, the Charlton manager, has to make decision on new signing John Barnes and striker Clive Mendonca. Former Newcastle player Barnes declared himself fit after a run-out in the reserves against Cambridge on Wednesday, but Curbishley said he may need more match action before he returns to the Premiership. Mendonca also played 90 minutes in the reserves. The Addicks' top scorer has been out with a groin injury since Christmas. Defensive duo Eddie Youds and Richard Rufus are both out. Youds has tendinitis and Rufus has a broken arm but is trying to get clearance to play wearing in a lightweight cast.

Liverpool captain Paul Ince picked up a leg injury during England's 2-0 defeat by France at Wembley on Wednesday and is a doubt. Patrick Berger has a hamstring problem and youngsters David Thompson or Steven Gerrard could be drafted into midfield. Steve Staunton, who was withdrawn from the Republic of Ireland squad for the Dublin game against Paraguay with a calf strain, should be fit to play. Rigoberto Song, who was an unused substitute in last weekend's 3-1 win over Middlesbrough, will also be staking a claim.

CHARLTON ATHLETIC (from): Royce, Mills, Tiler, Brown, Kanchelsky, Robinson, Redfern, Kerslake, Powell, Hunt, Pringle, Ilic, Jones, Barnes, Bright, Newton, Mendonca, Barnes. LIVERPOOL (from): James, Hoggan, Staunton, Carragher, Matteo, Harkness, Barmby, Redmond, Ince, McManaman, Owen, Fowler, Riedel, Thompson, Gerrard, Song, Kwame, Lechardson. Suspensions: None. Referee: M. Reed (Birmingham).



West Ham v Nottingham Forest



WEST HAM defender Neil Ruddock is fit again to play and is likely to replace Julian Dickson, who has flu. Ian Wright, Marc Kellner and Richard Hall all remain on the injured list. John Moncur also has a touch of flu and is rated as doubtful, but Steve Lomas has recovered from his illness.

Nottingham Forest's Ron Atkinson hopes to have Stale Stenass, Steve Chettle and John Harkes available. Jean-Claude Darcheville, who looked to be out of the running after damaging a hamstring in last Saturday's 8-1 defeat by Manchester United, could also be in contention. His problem is not as serious as first feared and the French striker could yet figure in Atkinson's plans. Stenass, meanwhile, is well on the road to recovery from the thigh injury that forced him to miss the United defeat. Harkes, who was nursing a sore hamstring earlier in the week, has been given the go-ahead to play while Chettle has shaken off a bad bout of flu.

WEST HAM UNITED (from): Heslop, Ruddock, Ferdinand, Pearce, Lomas, Milne, Lazaridis, Sinclair, Lampard, Fox, Berwick, Di Carlo, Kitson, Forrest, Cole, Hodges, Onyiah, Potts, Moncur, Abou, Coyne. NOTTINGHAM FOREST (from): Bessans, Harkes, Stenass, Armstrong, Palmer, Helle, Mattsson, Chettle, Scott, Gemmill, Johnson, Rogers, Portino, Van Hooydonk, Darcheville, Freedman, Snijder, Burt-Williams, Woon, Bonassi, Crossley. Suspensions: None. Referee: R. Harris (Oxford).



SPORT

THORNLEY'S CUP GOAL P30 • FRAN COTTON'S RUGBY VISION P21



Wilkinson stays until summer

HOWARD WILKINSON is set to continue as caretaker England coach until the summer when the Football Association will attempt to entice Kevin Keegan or Alex Ferguson to take the job permanently.

This would mean Wilkinson taking charge for the crucial European Championship qualifiers against Poland on 27 March, and, probably, Sweden and Bulgaria in June. He would then hope to hand over to a team with a good chance of qualifying for the finals to be held in the Netherlands and Belgium next year.

FOOTBALL

BY GLENN MOORE

Wilkinson kept the public, the pundits and the bookies guessing yesterday as the promised plume of smoke above his Lancaster Gate office failed to emerge. Instead a smoke-screen was released in the form of a statement which sought to buy time before he revealed his decision on whether to go for the post of national coach full-time.

However, it failed to obscure Wilkinson's belief, shared by

senior FA figures, that the job he is doing as technical director is too important to relinquish.

Wilkinson, who had a lengthy meeting with Noel White, the chairman of the FA's International Committee, said they had discussed "the current situation at the FA in the context of the recent restructuring proposals (largely put forward by Wilkinson) being taken forward within the FA."

"These proposals concern the integration of all professional and international football within the FA. Their implementation and the selection of the right person for the England coach are crucial if England are to become the world's best."

"The rush to make a decision, any decision, must not be allowed to force compromises to have to be made. These decisions will affect football in this country for the next 10 years."

"As a result of our discussions it is expected that an announcement will be made next week concerning the situation taking us through to June."

That announcement, which is likely to confirm Wilkinson's role until June, has been

delayed by the need to have it ratified by other members of the sub-committee responsible for appointing Glenn Hoddle's successor. This is why Wilkinson added: "Given my position within the FA it would not be appropriate at this time to make public my personal decision in respect of the position of England coach."

Both Keegan, the chief operating officer of Fulham, and Ferguson, the Manchester United manager, have heavy commitments to the end of this season.

The first is the FA Cup fifth-

round meeting between their clubs at Old Trafford tomorrow. The FA hope that Fulham will gain promotion, or United win the European Cup, and thus make it easier to prise the architect of such success away. Should both refuse to be lured, and Keegan is regarded as the more likely to accept despite his recent denials of interest, candidates such as Roy Hodgson and, in the short term, Bobby Robson, will re-enter the frame.

Wilkinson, a former Notts County, Sheffield Wednesday and Leeds manager, was

appointed caretaker within an hour of Hoddle's departure last week. He took charge of England's disappointing friendly with France on Wednesday which ended with a 2-0 defeat after Wilkinson had just three days coaching a squad that had been chosen by Hoddle.

As technical director Wilkinson has been responsible for pushing through the Charter for Quality which deals with the coaching and playing of football from eight-year-olds to the national team. Initiatives include the nationwide youth academy system, the creation of a national football centre, and the establishment of a coaches' association involving more extensive training and regular retraining of coaches at all levels.

Lawrie McMenemy, the Northern Ireland manager, yesterday claimed Keegan had all the credentials to become England coach, but then ruled him out for now because of his present position at Fulham.

"Kevin has all the attributes with the added bonus of having had a supreme career. But the timing, if they offered it to him this weekend, is wrong."

Football, pages 27 to 31

Charlton help other clubs over sabotage

CHARLTON WILL provide evidence to other Premier League clubs to ensure the electronic sabotage which threatened their game against Liverpool has not been copied.

The Addicks have checked their floodlight system at The Valley after it was tampered with, leading to four arrests in connection with an alleged Far Eastern betting ring. Charlton are keen to share their experience with other clubs to stop the English game becoming the victim of sabotage which can net gamblers huge rewards on the other side of the globe.

Detectives investigating the alleged plan to blow the lights at The Valley removed electrical equipment from the ground for evidence.

After a series of meetings involving the police and the Premier League, Charlton are ready to play their home game against Liverpool. It goes ahead as planned, kick-off 3pm, despite fears that it might be brought forward, or even postponed.

Charlton's managing director, Peter Varney, who has been at the centre of the discussions, said extensive work had been done to rectify the damage caused to the floodlights so the game could go ahead, and the South London club will be liaising closely with other clubs to make sure they have not been hit by floodlight saboteurs.

Varney said: "We will be providing evidence to all other Premier League clubs of how this has been done. If it's been copied at other clubs, they can put that right immediately."

"We've a very important role to play for football in this country, and if this has been copied at other clubs, we must eradicate that as soon as possible."

Four men, three Malaysians and a member of Charlton's security team, were arrested

BY MATT BARLOW

after a break-in at The Valley's power room on Wednesday when electrical cable was tampered with.

Police believe they may have thwarted a major betting sting involving big-money gambling syndicates based in Malaysia.

Varney added: "Substantial amounts of money have changed hands to bring about the sort of sabotage done to our electrical system. People only do that if they stand to make a huge financial gain from doing that."

Police are already looking into other Premiership matches that have been the victims of floodlight failures in recent seasons. Games at West Ham, Wimbledon and Derby have all been blacked out and a game at Manchester United was delayed last month when the lights failed.

Varney said Charlton had acted quickly in the best interests of the club even though this could have meant changing the kick-off time for the Liverpool game.

It was important for Charlton that the match went ahead, as they could steal a march on their relegation rivals on this FA Cup fifth round weekend if they could overcome Liverpool. Nottingham Forest, who travel to West Ham, are the only other strugglers in League action.

Varney said: "It's been a hectic few days for us all at the club but we're delighted to go ahead with the match, as planned."

Singapore's national league will become the first in Asia to legalise domestic betting when the season opens 31 March. One reason the practice has been restricted is because of fears it will lead to match-fixing and corruption.



Chelsea's Gianfranco Zola (left) and Celestine Babayaro play keep-up as they prepare for their fifth-round FA Cup tie against Sheffield Wednesday at Hillsborough today

FA cleared by Fifa over cash for votes case

AN INVESTIGATION by Fifa, football's world governing body, has cleared the English and Welsh Football Associations of any misconduct in the affair that led to the resignations of the English FA's chief executive, Graham Kelly, and chairman, Keith Wiseman.

It was alleged that the two men had been attempting to secure support from the Welsh FA for Wiseman's bid to be elected to the Fifa executive as the home nations' representative, in order to boost England's 2006 World Cup bid. Fifa executives spoke to representatives from both the FA and the Welsh FA at the end of January but have now ruled that the case is closed. A Fifa spokesman said: "We have found that there were no incorrect or improper actions that would warrant further investigation."

The FA, which has endured a chaotic past two months in which its chairman and chief executive, as well as the England team's head coach, Glenn Hoddle, have been forced to resign, welcomed the statement as an endorsement of its prompt actions. Kelly was the first to leave his post last December after the FA's executive committee ruled that he had acted without having first consulted either the committee or the FA's full council. Wiseman attempted to cling on to power until a meeting of the full council in early January but was met with widespread opposition and he too resigned.

Wiseman thanked the FA for having made clear that "no aspersions had been cast on my integrity or honesty" but was condemned for what his interim successor, Geoff Thompson, called an "error of judgment". Thompson, the former vice-chairman, and David Davies, the director of public affairs, have

BY ADAM SZRETER

been installed in the temporary roles of chairman and executive director respectively, and have already begun building bridges with Uefa, the European governing body, and Fifa.

The FA's spokesman, Steve Double, said: "We gave a full report on the circumstances of the departure of Graham Kelly and Keith Wiseman when David Davies and Geoff Thompson went to Switzerland to meet Fifa president Sepp Blatter two weeks ago... It was made clear to us that Fifa fully accepted our version of events and why the actions had to be taken. We are pleased that they have publicly confirmed that today."

Although the Fifa statement was not being seen at Lancaster Gate as an endorsement of his actions, Kelly also welcomed it as "good news". Kelly told BBC Radio 5 Live: "I didn't know there was an investigation going on but it's nice to be cleared by it. The critical issue was that I couldn't persuade the [FA] executive committee that what I was doing was legitimate and in the best interests of English football. We could have carried on arguing but it would have been a very messy dispute, and I don't know whether I would have won irrespective of today's findings by Fifa."

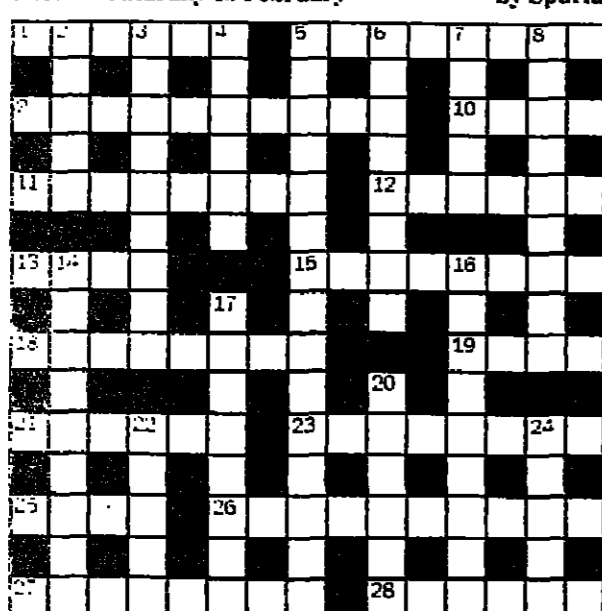
Asked whether the FA felt the two men were right to resign, Double said: "We take the view that they were. They acted without proper authority."

In the meantime the Welsh FA is still expecting a cheque for £900,000, less than the original £2.2m agreed between the two parties, although it remains unclear how and when this money will be paid. According to Double, the money will now come from the Football Trust rather than the FA.

THE SATURDAY CROSSWORD

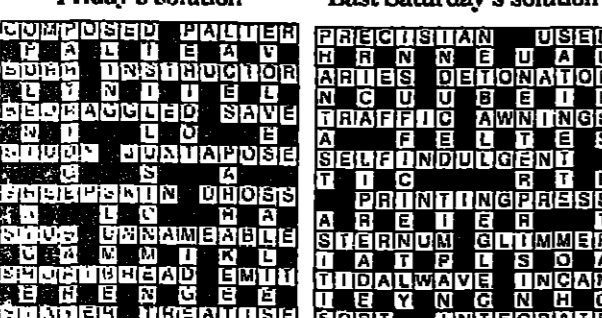
No. 2815 Saturday 13 February

by Spurius



Friday's solution

Last Saturday's solution



ACROSS

- Alternative route around eastern Thailand, somewhat hard (8)
- Article penned by hard-headed person in charge of a line of sailors (8)
- South American bully (6,4)
- Burden on old star's back (4)
- Secular poem incorrectly rendered in translation by a student (8)
- Fellow originally expressing thought, for example, about security (6)
- Sound system provided in Hawaii (12,2)
- State endless din's about to produce? (8)
- Natural material used in manufacture of pink bowl (8)
- Emblem German left out, as ordered (4)
- Fit clubs into new cases (6)
- Firm associated with smart little buzzer (8)
- Request from couple accepted (4)
- Complaint from husband initially somewhat immature, perhaps (10)
- When kind, journalist appears different (8)
- Very keen to wield the rod? (3,3)

DOWN

- "Weather" poem written after some hesitation (5)
- An aficionado of Graves, among others? (9)
- Horsemen one's seen in quaint dress (6)
- Security measures necessitating roundabout way to the Bank of England? (6,3,6)
- Loose nut's fate, really horrible (8)
- Billiard shot popular with old fellows (2,3)
- Majority held out for improvement after notice is given (9)
- In which some, though not all, members are equal? (9)
- Corrupted daughter putting on strange black vest (8)
- Sharp end of clipper? (8)
- Uplifting English musical about maiden runs for a season (6)
- Time to find poetic inspiration (5)
- Rope very big officer's abandoned on the way up (5)

The first five correct solutions to this week's puzzle opened next Thursday receive hand-drawn copies of the Oxford Dictionary of Quotations. Answers and winners' names will be published next Saturday. Send solutions to Saturday Crossword, P.O. Box 4018, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 3DL. Please use the box number and postcode and give your own postcode. Last week's winners: P. Boswell, Greywell; T. Screen, Aberlilly; J. Williams, Shrewsbury; M. Stokes, Clifton; V. Riley, Cheshire. Bumble.

Graveney wants an 'upbeat' England

AS RAIN swept in for the first time in Melbourne since Boxing Day, the second game of the Carlton & United Series final was washed out on Thursday night, and was due to start in the early hours of this morning.

If England win the second match against Australia to level the final at 1-1, the sides will have to meet again in a deciding tie tomorrow, an especially hectic conclusion for the players in the party who were also involved in the Ashes leg of the tour.

"I've stressed the point to all

CRICKET
BY DAVID FIELD
in Melbourne

of them that they have got to get back to the way they responded in the 'league' matches," England's tour manager, David Graveney, said. "They have to be upbeat about what they want to do and buzz as a team."

"There are several factors why you lose a game. A number of players mentioned to me why you lose a game, it's either by tension or something else."

"There was just a slightly different atmosphere for that game in Sydney, because we were in the finals as opposed to a play-off situation."

"We had a meeting as a whole group and we reaffirmed that we've got to look forward and not back. Australia will certainly want us to feel the impact of losing in that manner."

"It was a game we threw away, and the disappointment becomes very acute. Having lost the match as we did, the best cure is to get out there and play. It's no good kicking your heels."

On Thursday night, the

weather briefly cleared up in time for the England captain, Alec Stewart, to win the toss and elect to bat first, but that will now count for nothing.

England have given a vote of confidence to the side beaten in Sydney, while Australia have called up the Queensland and Essex all-rounder, Stuart Law, to replace Michael Bevan, who has dislocated a finger.

But the heavens opened while the teams stood for the national anthems, and the rain grew steeper before the umpires called off the match.

Cricket, page 23

IN MONDAY'S NEW 12-PAGE SPORTS SECTION

"I've lost nearly two stone in the last year. Why? Dunno. Certain amount of stress, possibly"

WILL CARLING TALKS TO RICHARD WILLIAMS




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هكذا من النظم

WEEKEND REVIEW


COMMENT • ARTS & BOOKS • COUNTRY & GARDEN • TRAVEL



RUSHDIE'S UNFUNNY VALENTINE
ESSAY, PAGE 7



WHAT JOHN LE CARRE DID NEXT
BOOKS, PAGE 15



WILD BOAR: ON THE LOOSE IN KENT?
COUNTRY, PAGE 18



ISLE OF LOVE: HONEYMOON IN MAURITIUS
TRAVEL, PAGE 19

Sex, adventure, places, writing – these are the ingredients of romance. Not for English men, though. From Lord Byron to Nick Drake, the great English Romantic has been an effete, narcissistic poseur, neutered by his own blankness

What do you expect from Romance? The sweep of a cloak, the sound of hooves, the lap of waves against a gondola, the spiral of smoke from blown-out candles, the first kiss in a shadowed hallway... Just don't expect it from Englishmen. For the concept of "romantic" has long taken root in the English soul as being little to do with tender passions.

"Romance" has several meanings: the major connotation is of course "a happy but short-lived affair". Other connotations are "a spirit of or inclination for adventure, excitement or mystery", and "a mysterious, exciting, sentimental or nostalgic quality associated with a place"; and lastly, "literary narratives that deal with events and characters remote from ordinary life".

So that's romance: sex, adventure, places and writing. The trouble with Romantic Englishmen is that they take too literally the second, third and fourth, and tend to downgrade the first. They'd rather get into scrapes, travel, write and move on than behave like eligible partners. From Lord Byron to Bruce Chatwin, the line exhibits consistent but puzzling characteristics. There seem to be five main characteristics of the Romantic Englishman: he went to a good school, he has unruly hair; he writes a bit, he is always in transit, and some people think he's homosexual.

BY JOHN WALSH

Take his most recent embodiments, Joe Fienness and Richard E Grant. Both actors emotive spectacularly; they're all eyes and mouth. Mr Grant, playing the Scarlet Pimpernel, did his habitual mad gleam and sharky grin. Mr Fienness, playing Will Shakespeare in *Shakespeare in Love*, does the brimming pools and open-mouthed astonishment that are his joint trademark. But as men of action, they both leave much to be desired.

Watching Fienness scampering through Elizabethan London, asleep at his desk or supine in the theatre circle, you feel you're watching a spindly, art-shop marionette, a perplexed Giacometti sculpture come to life. Grant, as Sir Percy Blakeney, metamorphoses from a foppish, lorgnette-twirling court popinjay to a dashing, Paris-bound, blade-twirling Zorro of the Tuilleries; but he doesn't quite make it. Confronted by Chauvelin's secret police, he does a lot of prancing about, shouting "Take that, you brute", and engaging in fisticuffs, but always suggesting he'd be happier in the gym at Harrow, giving his tag a gentlemanly drubbing.

Of course, the parts they're playing are writers. Shakespeare is a world-class stealer of other people's ideas for his plays, and the Pimpernel is a sub-Oscar epigrammatist and composer of "They seek him here" doggerel. Writing is mandatory for Romantic Englishmen. For English sensibilities, there's no romance without composition and, preferably, publication – love as Dedication and Acknowledgements. "If you read a lot of travel books," a woman friend told me, wistfully, "you'd be surprised how many acknowledgements there are to women 'in whose house I spent a profitable three months', after which, presumably, the author took his manuscript, his conversation and his attenuated passion off to another house and another Muse." In the real "Romance" countries, the language of wooing and seduction is urgent, rhetorical and personal: for the Romantic Englishman, it's tentative, measured and probably about the mating habits of the Hopi tribespeople.

Public schools, travel and writing seem an inescapable triad of requirements for the Romantic Englishman. Start with Byron, who went to Harrow, and Shelley (Eton), and you're pitched in a maelstrom of sexual irregularity, restless travel-



Who do you love?

ling through Europe and precocious literary activity. In more recent times, the restlessly-travelling British dreamboat has rarely been to a secondary-modern in Streatlam: Bruce Chatwin went to Marlborough, Colin Thubron went to Eton, as did Robin Hanbury-Tenison and Mark McCrum, while Willie Dalrymple went to Ampleforth. Looking at the places they inspect – Dalrymple went to India, McCrum to South Africa, Australia and Ireland – they seem like the grandsons of empire, casting a puzzled eye over what had become of the former colonies and dominions.

Or they become expatriate exotics. Two of the most glamorous Englishmen I've ever met, William Riviere and James Hamilton-Paterson, both travellers and writers, lived in the foothills of Umbria, each by himself; they rarely met. Hamilton-Paterson existed without electricity or plumbed-in water; wrote the brilliant *Gerontius* in six weeks and spent half of each year among the pirates of the Philippines; Riviere lived less frugally, wrote exquisitely impressionistic novels, affected a walking cane and a hat and entertained friends in London, at the Travellers Club.

Romantic Englishmen have always got to be elsewhere. Their watchword, whether they know the song or not, is "I'm the type of boy who is always on the road/ Wherever I lay my hat, that's my home". In America you get Jack Kerouac and Neal Cassady, travelling and writing prose as an expression of macho individuality; for Englishmen, it's leaving home in order to bring the world back.

It's extraordinary how many exponents of the genre write books about their RE predecessors. Thus Charles Nicholl, intrepid adventurer of *The Fruit Palace*, wrote about the life and death of Christopher Marlowe, a classically dangerous, restless, sexually dubious RE. Thus Patrick French, the camp, jellaba-clad biographer of Frances Younghusband, the Victorian explorer, soldier, mystic and lover. Robert McCrum, the publisher, Observer literary editor and elder brother of Mark, wrote a novel called *The Romantic Englishman* in a triumphant feat of self-identification. Nicholas Shakespeare, who grew up in Peru as a diplomat's son, went to Winchester and has only recently returned from a long trek in India, is shortly to bring out a biography of Bruce Chatwin, the dandy of travellers, forever bounding across the globe from Patagonia to the Sahara, collecting exotic and jewelled objects while gradually turning himself into one. For the women (and men) in his life Chatwin was unimpassioned in a way that's typical of the RE; you could have him for a while, like a beautiful possession, but sooner or later you had to relinquish possession to someone else.

Travel writers apart, you can find the Romantic Englishman popping up in the music world. Nick Drake, who killed himself aged 26, was a sad-eyed, Shelleyan, Marlborough-educated visionary with a deep, melodic English singing line. It was assumed that he never had an emotional relationship with anyone, but the girls are starting to come out of the woodwork. A (female) singer-songwriter called Robin Frederick writes, in this month's *Mojo*, about how "Nick would appear at odd hours of the night at my flat. I'd let him in and we'd pass the time playing songs for each other. He stared at the wall, or the floor, or into the fire. Falling in love with Nick was a no-brainer, and I promptly did. He was extraordinarily attractive and that, plus his natural quietness, made it easy to weave a web of fantasies around him".

Continued on page 2

A cameo of Romantics, clockwise from top: Byron, Leslie Howard, Joe Fienness, Nicholas Shakespeare, Shelley, Colin Thubron, Bruce Chatwin, Nick Drake, Keith Richards, Robert McCrum, Ralph Fienness, Rupert Brooke. Centre, Dennis Price as Lord Byron

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about love? Natasha Walter
on Valentine's day

PLUS

Chris Patten's diary



Winter in Moscow No 6: To supplement their meagre diet, unemployed men fish for carp through holes cut in the ice on the Moskva river

Andy Johnstone

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Driven to hunt

Sir: Sadly, hunt followers in four-wheel-drive vehicles are not confined to the South Downs (letter, 10 February). We experienced a similar phenomenon on Exmoor last year. But there, because there are many rural tracks which connect, it is possible for the cars continually to drive round in circles attempting to catch sight of the hunt.

We set off with our children for a three-quarter mile stroll down an unmetalled track to a remembered peaceful picnic spot by the river Barle. The first sign that all was not as it should be was a group of three motorbikes that repeatedly cast around up and down the hillside. Then, an increasing roar signalled the progress along the track of 10 four-wheel-drives. We hugged the hedge while they passed, then plodded on. Half a mile further, having completed their circuit, they streamed past again. We reached the river and sat down. Vroom - this time three quad bikes raced past adjacent to the riverbank footpath, pausing only to ask if we had seen the hunt.

Deciding that this was not the place to be, we packed up ready to walk back up the hill. Briefly, we were passed by the huntmen and hounds themselves. As we cajoled the children back up the track we were again ousted by the motorised entourage.

The track, which years ago had been an easy walk used by pedestrians, horses and sheep, was now rutted and churned up.

JOANNE WELCH
MICHAEL SILVERLEAF
London SE5

Sir: The vast majority of 4x4 owners who use byways do so responsibly. They have a self-imposed code of conduct, which includes staying away from byways whose surface is damaged and needs time to recover. Voluntary restraint notices, which are seen as a grown-up alternative to Traffic Regulation Orders, are posted in consultation with county councils, and are adhered to by all but the

inevitable, irresponsible minority who exist in every walk of life.

It is saddening to see Duff Hart-Davis (Country Matters, 6 February) resorting to the age-old emotive language of the anti-4x4 lobby, saying they "churn green lanes, bridleways and footpaths into a morass". Recreational off-roaders simply do not drive on footpaths or bridleways; to do so is against the law. Of the very few rights of way that are open to vehicles, only a tiny number are prone to excessive surface damage.

In my experience, intransigence on both sides can be put down to one factor: greed. That is what causes a small number of 4x4 owners to use the countryside without any regard for others. Likewise, it is the real reason for people wanting to ban them. Mr Hart-Davis doesn't want to share his own personal bucolic idyll with others whose presence offends him.

ALAN KIDD
Cowden, Kent

What FO policy?

Sir: For Anne McElvoy (Comment, 10 February) to write that British foreign policy towards Sierra Leone wasn't right and didn't work misses the point. There is no clearly articulated policy regarding Sierra Leone. The most urgent need is a clear statement of policy towards Sierra Leone from the British government.

The ethical issue is clear. This matter is about the future of the ballot box in West Africa - do we support the democratically elected President Kabbah and give democratic government a chance to take root or, through inaction or procrastination, allow a bloody and futile civil war to rage?

The rebels have their backers - Liberia and, reportedly, mercenaries and arms from Ukraine. The rebels have no political programme and no desire to engage in the democratic process. They are murderous thugs who kill their own

indiscriminately. The rebel interest is purely power and personal greed. This is the alternative for Sierra Leone.

The murky goings-on in the Foreign Office could have been avoided. The failure of this government was not to provide unequivocal backing to President Kabbah from the outset. Sierra Leone is now left with a devastated economy, with the democratic experiment in tatters and with no obvious end in sight to the civil war.

It is ironic that our own preoccupation with the lack of parliamentary scrutiny over Foreign Office officials is exercising political opinion to a greater degree than the issue itself - helping a nation to move away from "rule of the gun" towards "rule of law".

MARK WITHERS
ANNA WITHERS
Abingdon, Oxfordshire

Refugee targets

Sir: The decision by the Home Secretary to deprive refugees seeking political asylum of their right to social security benefits is shameful.

Ministers have decided that political refugees make an easy and populist target as the economic weather turns stormy. Refugees will be prevented from becoming integrated into British society. Without money you cannot be part of normal everyday society. The decision also has major implications for all other social security claimants. If refugees can live on food stamps and vouchers, what is there to stop this principle being extended to anyone who is unemployed or unwaged?

We also condemn the attempt to disperse refugees. When my grandparents, and most other Jewish immigrants, came to Britain, they headed for the East End of London or the industrial cities of the North. Today's refugees also want to be with their own communities. To forcibly disperse people, on pain of losing the right to basic sustenance, will isolate those who are already traumatised and leave them as a target for attack by fascist and racist

groups. In Germany, where a similar policy applies, this is exactly what has happened.

Political refugees are not, for the most part, bogus or "economic migrants". They are the consequence of arms exports from the developed world, and Britain is the world's second biggest arms producer. The Government's "ethical" foreign policy allows profits from arms sales to continue but seeks to keep out their human debris.

TONY GREENSTEIN
Brighton Unemployed Centre

Sir: One of the tests of the Immigration and Asylum Bill currently before Parliament is its effect on the most vulnerable - children. The UK so far has not agreed to give special protection to child refugees or asylum seekers as stipulated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The introduction of this Bill is an opportunity to do so.

MARIE STAUNTON
Deputy Director
UNICEF - UK
London WC2

Secret polluters

Sir: Richard Cormack (letter, 10 February) should focus his concern north of the border. The real scandal is not *The Independent's* headline, which treated pollution figures for England and Wales as applying to the whole of Britain, but that similar information on emissions from factories cannot be made available to those living in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

People throughout the UK should have the right to know about who is releasing pollution into their area and what the potential health impacts might be. Currently, accessing most pollution information in Scotland is complicated, time consuming and expensive. In some cases the figures are either not available or not even collected. Easy public access to environmental information is key if we are to have environmental justice in Scotland. Friends of the Earth Scotland supports the aims of Matthew Taylor MP's

Community Right to Know Bill, which would make such information more easily available to the public. We will be seeking similar if not stronger powers from the new Scottish Parliament.

Dr RICHARD DIXON
Head of Research
Friends of the Earth Scotland
Edinburgh

Welsh campaign

Sir: David Aaronovitch makes some curious points in his piece on prospective Welsh First Minister Rhodri Morgan ("These rebels may be game for a laugh, but they're good for nothing", 9 February). He begins by asserting that Morgan is the favoured candidate of the political press yet fails to mention the relentless and heavy-handed media campaign waged in favour of his opponent, Alun Michael, by Tony Blair and the Labour Party front bench.

What these attacks reveal is the frustration of the Labour Party establishment with regional electorates who, far from thanking the Labour leadership for granting them a measure of autonomy, instead appear intent upon using it to support local candidates.

Perhaps Aaronovitch should relax a little and consider what exactly is the point of devolution unless it is to reflect the identity of - and offer the opportunity for political participation to - regional communities. If Blair succeeds in imposing Michael's candidacy, then perhaps Aaronovitch could explain precisely what the Welsh people gain over the present system of appointees to the Welsh office.

MARK ALASZEWSKI
Leeds

In the slow lane

Sir: The views expressed on car speeds by Mervyn Curran and JJ Putnam (letters, 3, 6 February) need to be seriously questioned. While I agree that the idea of life in a society where everybody ambles along at 20mph sounds idyllic, it is an unwelcome and dangerous fantasy.

If every vehicle halves its speed, it will take twice as long to complete its journey; hence road occupancy will double and our roads will become twice as congested. Crossing the road will therefore become harder, not easier, in most urban and suburban areas.

In any case, our society depends for its wealth and stability upon constant economic expansion through improved communications; to hamstring it through artificial restraints would be an act of Luddism and economic folly.

OLIVER HOWARTH
Wolverhampton, West Midlands

IN BRIEF

Sir: The account of the shooting down of Amy Johnson which you published on 6 February ("Amy Johnson, my part in her downfall") said that Amy Johnson's aircraft was contacted by radio and a request was made for the colours of the day. She was said to have given the wrong signal twice. In fact Amy Johnson was flying a trainer, an Airspeed Oxford, for the Air Transport Auxiliary. Ferry pilots did not have radio. Amy Johnson was known to be lost and running out of fuel. If she had had radio, she would have been alerting anyone who heard her for help.

PENELOPE DENT
London N19

Sir: How amusing to read Richard Dawkins's "bluffer's guide" to the penal substitutionary theory of atonement (letter, 9 February). There is some evidence here of a first-rate theological mind, though also concern about a fundamentalist strain in his thinking. Further reading could be of help (I should be happy to supply a list); but since, in the current jargon of pastoral care, we are asked to "get alongside people where they are", perhaps Professor Dawkins could start with *The Ladybird Book of Jesus*. It would represent a considerable advance.

The Rev JOHN SWARBRICK
Maidenhead, Berkshire

Who does the English Romantic really love?

Continued from page 1

Ms Frederick has put her finger on something here: the damned elusiveness of the Romantic Englishman and the central blankness into which would-be attachments can pour their desires.

Drake's depression has been attributed by some to his latent homosexuality, another recurring element in the RE profile. Confusingly, for the women in their lives, many Romantic Englishmen are quite amazingly effete. Baroness Orczy, author of the Pimpernel stories, took one look at the Anglo-Hungarian Leslie Howard and decided he was just too limp-

wristed to play Sir Percy. Elyot Chase, the romantic lead in Noel Coward's *Private Lives*, and a byword in male sophistication, wooed his ex-wife back from her new husband by the rhetoric of love, but is not above saying: "If [your husband] comes near me, I'll scream the place down." Female fans of Colin Thubron have gazed at his thrilling physiognomy, as their forbears once gazed at Rupert Brooke's, and sadly concluded he must be gay (wrong in both cases). Keith Richards of the Rolling Stones, a Romantic Englishman to millions of both sexes, can come across as the hard-as-nails, two-fisted



Nick Drake, object of loveliness

roughneck one moment, and the next become the figure who used to wear Anita Pallenberg's silk blouses, and recently fell off a ladder while languidly reaching for a volume of Leonardo prints.

It's very confusing. But the word "effete" comes from the Latin *ex foetus*, and means "exhausted by childbirth", or by creativity. So if you're the kind of chap who writes, composes and turns himself into an object of loveliness, a little camp exhaustion is only to be expected. After spending the 19th century building an empire, establishing trade links with the far world, industrialising the nation and

fighting the Russians, you could forgive the English for wanting, as the pinnacle of their ambitions, some quiet, reflective episodes in exotic locations.

There's something classically narcissistic about the Romantic Englishman. He doesn't need women, though he likes their company. He doesn't want to be detained by their desires. He is happier being on the move, constantly en route between one destination and the next, inspecting the world for images of himself, which he then writes about with his educated, golden pen. Women may be allowed to fulfil the function of Muse, but

their Echo-like desire for the self-absorbed Narcissus won't make him turn his face towards them, away from the mirror in which he regards himself.

It's a tough break falling in love with an RE, as Caroline Lamb or Harriet Shelley (or Anne Chawin, or Lady Marguerite Blakeney) could have told you. They're always somewhere else, somewhere under a post-colonial sun, squinting at the horizon, one hand on hip, choosing an adjective, dreaming of glory. You may get a jewelled Egyptian scarab out of it, or a 1,000-year-old egg. Or a place in the next page of acknowledgements.

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Mr Clinton's next trial is to prove he is a world leader

THANK GOODNESS it is all over. A year ago, President Clinton looked bruised, vulnerable, truculent and earnest. After going through the wringer of investigation, trial and acquittal, he looks, well, bruised, vulnerable, truculent and earnest. It is most odd. The full weight of the American constitution has borne down on Mr Clinton. The high-rise moralising of the American and world media has toppled over on him. And he has emerged from the cyclone like Dorothy at the end of *The Wizard of Oz*, back at home behind the white picket fence.

Nothing much has changed, except that Mr Clinton is more popular now than a year ago. The American economy has continued to defy the laws of both gravity and economics, and the President has continued to take the credit for Alan Greenspan's shrewd management.

But important lessons have been learned. Journalists, and not just in the United States, have discovered that voters are quite capable of deciding, if they are given the facts, that a politician can be flawed and still be good at his job. And they were certainly given the facts. However, although journalists may have contributed to the hysteria preceding the successive waves of salacious revelation, they were not responsible for the revelations themselves. It was the President himself who caused the gross invasion of his own and Monica Lewinsky's privacy. If he had only pleaded the Fifth Amendment – the right not to incriminate himself – in the Paula Jones case, he would not have lied about his affair with the intern. With the arrogance of power, he could not have foreseen that he would be tripped up by a caricature Nemesis called Tripp. But in the end, knowing more than any of them could reasonably have wanted to know, the American people decided none of it mattered.

Their verdict was transmitted through the machinery of the constitution, which may not be as good as American patriots think it is, but which is never the less a magnificent democratic construction. The case against the President was more than fully aired and the right result was achieved: Mr Clinton was humiliated and embarrassed, but endorsed as chief executive.

As a result, the Republican party has learnt something too, although it is too shell-shocked to know what it is. The one person who seems to have learnt nothing is Kenneth Starr, whom Mrs Malaprop might have described as the "independent persecutor". Yesterday's vote may not be, of course, the absolute end of the story because Mr Starr shows every sign of wanting to bring criminal charges against his quarry in the ordinary courts. It is not clear whether he can do this while Mr Clinton is still in office, but as Mr Starr's commission lasts for one year after the President leaves office, he will certainly be able to do it then.

Mr Starr's coda apart, though, the world can breathe a sigh of relief and turn to more important matters. Mr Clinton has a world to lead and a place in history to secure. And it is in foreign policy that he needs to work hardest in order to make up for lost time. For, although the agonies and distractions of the impeachment process have had surprisingly few ill effects in domestic affairs, damage has been done to America's moral authority abroad. In particular, Mr Clinton bombed an aspirin factory in the suburbs of Khartoum in order to draw attention away from his broadcast admission, two days before, of a relationship with Ms Lewinsky that was



"not appropriate" and "wrong". That was inexcusable, and it is noticeable that no evidence has since been produced to substantiate the claim that it was making chemical weapons. Not in America, and not here, despite the British Government's fulsome support for the bombing. It was illegal, but it was also a big tactical error, because it will have fuelled the sense of Arab Muslim grievance against the US and its allies – the sense of grievance which inspires the same fundamentalist terrorists against whom the bombing was aimed.

Now, though, Mr Clinton has the chance to look forward over the next two years and to redeem himself as the last 20th-century president. There is bound to be a worry that he only operates well – and when he operates well, he is undoubtedly a brilliant politician – when

he is under pressure. He may be tempted to relax into an extended transition to an Al Gore presidency. For the sake of a world which could see the rule of law increasingly take the place of the superpower rivalries which once held sway, it is to be hoped that Mr Clinton feels the goad of the historian's pen in the small of his back. Peace, human rights and a sustainable ecology require an attentive leader of the most powerful nation.

He cannot escape the fate of being the president who brought the Oval Office into bawdy ridicule. But now that he has been acquitted, he has the chance to add to that the distinction of being the first president to emerge strengthened from impeachment, and the first to translate the high ideals of the American constitution, which in the end served him well, into international law.

Slush, mush and an orgy of marketing

HE IS listed in *Butler's Lives of Patron Saints* in between Ubald, patron saint for protection from dog bites, rabies or hydrophobia, and Venantius, patron saint against danger from falling, or jumping and leaping. It would make just as much sense, theologically, historically and superstitiously, for card printers and helium-filled balloon-makers to sell "beware of the dog" paraphernalia on 16 May. Or "mind the gap" paraphernalia on 18 May.

But no. Slush, mush, and a cheap synthetic notion of romantic love have made St Valentine the commercial success story of the coldest month. The doubtful legacy of at least two separate saints called Valentine, who are both alleged to have died on 14 February, has been fed into the homogenising machine of modern capitalism for creating popular culture. Valentine has been extruded in much the same way as the equally doubtful history of St Nicholas. Church pleas to recall the ostensible purpose of the Christ Mass in marking the birth of Jesus have been drowned by the racket of toy advertising, which starts long before the day of the patron saint of children on 6 December. The red-jacketed Santa Claus was not, in fact, invented by the Coca-Cola corporation, but he might as well have been. (According to Butler's, St Nicholas is also patron saint of brides, unmarried women, pawnbrokers, perfumiers, Russia, travellers and sailors – a range of commercial opportunities which remain unexploited so far.)

Is nothing sacred? It appears not. Easter is heading the same way, for the purpose of retailing large quantities of chocolate. It is the pagan fertility symbols which get top billing rather than the cross and the stigmata.

As soon as the Xmas/New Year double retailing opportunity was over, some supermarkets immediately began displaying Easter eggs – skipping Valentine's Day in their eagerness to hit the next pre-programmed "special occasion".

A calendar based on saint's days has now been reconstructed in a series of artificial festivals celebrated in the temples of mammon. Mother's Day is next. Halloween and Guy Fawkes have increasing potential as a kind of two-for-the-price-of-one bumper special. Supermarkets are even trying to flog turkeys for Thanksgiving and the invented Father's Day is now an established feature. New days for grandparents, siblings and in-laws are in the offing. And this year all this date-ology will end in the consummate silliness of the new millennium.

Yes, we know. All newspapers succumb to the romantic fever in some form (and we too are guilty). But all the same, roll on Monday.

Noteworthy figure

THE BANK of England is about to produce a £20 note that will feature a likeness of Edward Elgar. This is all wrong. The composer of "Land of Hope and Glory" has been hijacked by those nostalgic for imperial glories, despite valiant efforts to reclaim him for the left. We have an alternative. As it is to be hoped this will be the last new banknote before the euro is adopted, we nominate Adam Smith. Currently adorning the back of Clydesdale Bank's £50 notes, the great Scottish – and British – thinker merits wider recognition for giving liberal free-market economics to the world. May the Hidden Hand move the fuddy-duddies of Threadneedle Street.

Does this modern nation still need a Poet Laureate?

MY FRIEND the poet Brendan Kennelly recalls a relative once asking him what he was working at. Writing poetry, Kennelly replied. "Ah, poetry my arse," replied the relative. It wasn't that he didn't like verse or that he didn't like Brendan. But there were fields to plough, animals to tend to, bills to be paid. The relative poked on Brendan's poetic preoccupation as something of another world.

The fact that the fields and hills of North Kerry, lonely and stark and memory laden, provided this poet's inspiration did not matter; the fact that Kennelly's poetry did honour to the small farmers and their families, that it spoke of the truth of their lives, did not come into play. Poetry, it was implied, never put food on any man's table. It was stuff for colleges and scholars. Hearing the story, I was tempted to summon up some lines of Patrick Kavanagh's, lines that speak about the drama of small lives set against great events.

"I have lived in important places, times / When great events were decided, who owned / That half a rood of rock, a no man's land / Surrounded by our pitchfork-armed claims... / Inclined / To lose my faith in Balinish and Gortin, / Till Homer's ghost came whispering to my mind. / He said: I made the Illiad from such / A local row. Gods make their own importance."

I am thinking of poetry, its role and relevance, because of the renewed debate about a Poet Laureate. Twice in the past fortnight, speculation about the Laureateship has graced the grubby pages of the daily press. Now a decent interval has passed since the death of Ted Hughes, the Prime Minister's

adviser is taking soundings in the literary world. The latest speculation surrounds, rather improbably, the Nobel Laureate Seamus Heaney.

Seamus Heaney is a native of Ireland's County Derry. His Protestant neighbours regard themselves as British; Seamus Heaney considers himself Irish. His name and cultural background are Irish and not British. He is notoriously opposed to being labelled a British poet. Did he not write: "My passport's green, no glass of ours was ever raised to toast the Queen?" Is that message not clear enough for Downing Street?

Perhaps there are those who believe that the Laureateship can act as some kind of cultural bridge-builder, a device to stress the shared nature of our cultural experience on these islands. (That latter phrase is not me talking but what I imagine an arts minister would say in justifying the choice.) They can forget it. Seamus Heaney will never be Poet Laureate.

He means what he says when he points out that he is not British. Even suggesting that he be made Laureate represents a kind of trendy tokenism that insults the man's talent and his proudly felt sense of cultural identity. This is not a nationalist argument or a plea for cultural exclusivity. I loathe both concepts. It is just common sense. We would hardly instal a Russian or a German or a French poet as Laureate, would we?

If I were a British poet, I would find the notion of trawling outside Britain for a Poet Laureate vaguely insulting. Harrison and Fenton have ruled themselves out. But what about the excellent Simon Armitage? Young, accessible (a ghastly word, but you



FERGAL KEANE
Poetry has always been a threatened creature. Poets are not literary stars and sell few books

know what I mean) and – to truly delight New Labour – "relevant". Armitage would be my favourite.

But if the Prime Minister's office is looking for someone who will act as a symbol of a new, inclusive Britain, then they should look no further than Derek Walcott. He is not a Brit but he does belong to the commonwealth. He is linked in a very definite and tangible way to this island. And he writes of Britain as an insider/outsider, somebody who cherishes the language but who understands the nature of exclusion. Consider *The Bright Field*.

"My nerves steeled against the power of London, I hurried home that evening, with the sense we all have of the crowd's hypocrisy, to feel my rage turned on in self-defence, bear mercy for the anonymity of every self humbled by massive places, and I who moved against the bitter sea was moved by the light / on Underground-bound faces."

Whoever gets the job, there will be inevitable and perhaps unflattering comparisons with Ted Hughes. Hughes did not produce great public poetry as Laureate. The verses he produced for royal occasions were pleasant, but uninspiring. It was the greater body of his work, his "real" work, which invested the office of Laureate with a craggy nobility. Hughes will cast a long shadow. But to those who say there is no comparable poet in Britain today, I say wait, give it time.

The more fundamental argument is whether we need the Laureateship at all. It goes back to my first point. Is poetry that important, is it relevant enough to our lives to warrant preserving this national institution? There is an argument that our culture has fragmented to such a degree that the idea of honouring poetry – in its most conventional sense – is wrong. Why not have a "rock" laureate, a "performance art" laureate? My answer is simple.

Music and art are doing all right. Poetry has always been a threatened creature. With a few notable exceptions, poets live a hand-to-mouth existence. They sell few copies of their books; they travel the length and breadth of the country reading to bored schoolchildren in draughty schools; they are not literary "stars" in the manner of the big novelists or dramatists. It is a tough road.

The poets deserve better. You cannot create a mass market but by maintaining Laureateship you do at least make a statement about the importance of poetry as an art form. It is not a luxury, it is not solely the problems of the high-minded or the intellectual elite. Heaney, Armitage,

Walcott speak to us in language that manages to challenge and yet create a strange familiarity.

For me the best of poetry combines literary verve with subject and ideas that speak of the world I live in, the personal and the public world. Heaney has made the case that poetry can make things happen, that it represents an assertion of intellectual and spiritual freedom in a world of dictatorships and censorship where the mass media is increasingly obsessed with trivia. If literature is concerned with ideas as much as it is about political structures, then who can doubt the role of Mandelstam and Pablo Neruda, among others? Their poetry transcended the brutal repression of their times. It offers a vision of freedom, tantalising but ultimately possible.

The Poet Laureate of Britain will write of a country that is, relatively speaking, prosperous and calm. Yet the issues of nationality and identity have never been more relevant. It will be a poet who can speak to the Scots and Welsh and English, who can speak to the people of Ulster, as somebody who feels part of the broader British community but understands the passion that conflict of identity can stir.

Perhaps the answer to the dilemma of the Laureateship is to make it a temporary post, to appoint a new Laureate every five or 10 years. If language itself is constantly evolving, why limit the job to the same person until their death?

I will finish with Heaney's words. He summed up his sense of the poet as someone journeying into "the heartland of the ordinary". "Still my old self" he wrote, "ready to knock one back. A 9-to-5 man who had seen poetry."

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MONITOR

ALL THE NEWS OF THE WORLD

Chris Woodhead's gaffe • King Hussein of Jordan's Funeral • Oscar nominations • Death of Iris Murdoch • Restrictions in Gibraltar

CHRIS WOODHEAD'S GAFFE

Comment following the remark of the Chief Inspector of Schools about affairs between teachers and pupils

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

THE REASON for the emphasis given to Mr Woodhead's remark - Government proposals for a one-year prison sentence for teachers and other "figures in authority who have sexual relationships with 16- or 17-year-olds in their care" - is the legislative equivalent of a knee-jerk response designed to appease the questioner. In his original comments, Mr Woodhead declared that "human beings can get themselves into messes"; the furore his remarks created are proof enough of that. The real mess, however, lies in the Government's readiness to create a dog's dinner by legislating without any apparent forethought.

THE GUARDIAN

CHRIS WOODHEAD stays. That is both proper and right. He will never be popular with teachers but that is no fault in a chief inspector. He could be more diplomatic, but better his bluntness than the discretion of earlier inspectors which helped cover up unacceptable faults. Woodhead's image is not all his own fault. He does praise teachers too, but that does not get reported.

DAILY MAIL

ON THE one hand Labour is arguing that boys of 16 are adult enough to make their own sexual choices; on the other hand it concedes that they can be exploited by adults and need protection. Yet when the Chief Inspector of Schools appears to suggest that teachers who have affairs with girl pupils need not be sacked there is a justifiable outcry. Truly we live in confusing times.

THE MIRROR

DESPITE BOTH making stupid comments, Glenn Hoddle and Chris Woodhead have suffered very different fates. In Hoddle's case, an ill-considered remark about the disabled cost him his job. Yet Woodhead is clinging on to his post as head of Britain's school inspectors

despite his comments about teachers sleeping with pupils. The reason why one went and the other has stayed in easy to spot. It is because Tony Blair stuck his oar into the Hoddle row, but so far he has kept out of the Woodhead affair. For someone who claims that education is his top priority, his silence in the Woodhead affair is mystifying. This strange set of priorities comes only a few days after he attacked the media for focusing on trivial matters. In future, he would do well to look to his own record before making such accusations.

NEW STATESMAN

I HAVE no view on what Chris Woodhead's fate should be. But would his comments have been treated with such forbearance by Tony Blair if, instead of saying that sixth-formers should be sexually available to their teachers, he had said something genuinely irresponsible, such as calling for the abolition of the charitable status of private schools?

THE EXPRESS

MR WOODHEAD has battled against vested interests in the effort to improve standards. He has proven himself to be a man of courage and integrity who has fought for every child to receive a decent education. It has been tough but he does it because he values good education. That is what he should be judged on, not an off-the-cuff remark. Mr Woodhead has given a full explanation of himself and has apologised. If he is willing to display more reticence on issues other than the nuts and bolts of schooling, that should be the end of the matter.

THE SUN

DAVID BLUNKETT is right to back Chris Woodhead. The chief inspector of schools has been tireless in raising standards. His affair with a former pupil is ancient history. And he has admitted his remarks about teachers having relationships with pupils were wrong. Woodhead is NOT another Glenn Hoddle.

An unrivalled array of power

JORDAN TIMES

THE SUPPORT and expressions of solidarity that Jordan has received on both the regional and the international fronts yesterday has certainly been reassuring. While Jordanians expressed their grief over the loss of His Majesty King Hussein, they equally rallied to pledge allegiance to his chosen heir, His Majesty King Abdullah. Both the Arab World and the international communities wasted no time in demonstrating their support for Jordan in its moment of sadness. It can genuinely be said that King Hussein's legacy as the champion of peace humbled even the mighty yesterday as Jordan laid its King to rest.

THE NEW YORK TIMES

IN DEATH, King Hussein was able to do once more what he often did while living - draw together divided men. What mattered in Amman was the keen emotion of the moment and, no less, the spectacle of seeing such an unrivalled array of powerful faces. Behind a military band and an honour guard, the extraordinary group walked together through the cold, bleached light of Amman. They did not succeed in giving the funeral pomp. They were captured instead by its silent, eloquent modesty, more powerful in its way than pomp could ever be.

THE NATION

PRIME MINISTER Mian Nawaz Sharif's visit to Amman, to pay homage to the late King Hussein of Jordan and join his funeral procession along with heads of states, prime ministers and representatives of more than 40 countries, was an occasion of some political importance, not only because Pakistan has had a long history of friendship with Jordan, but also because it provided an opportunity to the Prime Minister to establish personal contacts with the new King. As happens on such occasions, however, with so many heads of other governments also being there, it was a golden opportunity to meet at least those aware of Pakistan's problems and ex-



KING HUSSEIN OF JORDAN'S FUNERAL

International comment on the gathering of world leaders in Jordan to attend the funeral of King Hussein

change ideas with them about the ways of resolving them.

TURKISH DAILY NEWS

DURING A period in which there are speculations about many kingdoms reaching their end, it is a significant accomplishment

for a family to retain power in a country that is not their soil of origin and that was manufactured to fit a purpose. It is also a great success for a king to die in his sick bed after remaining in power for 46 long years, particularly in a region that experienced four major Arab-Israeli wars, one regional war and a series of clashes and uprisings. Let's wait and see if the young

King Abdullah will sustain the success achieved by his father, and will receive the support of his uncle who, until only a week ago, thought he himself would be the one to assume the throne.

BAHRAIN TRIBUNE

KING HUSSEIN is dead. The world paid an unprecedented tribute to a man whose impact on the Middle East and on the world will be evident for some decades to come. The funeral procession was not pompous. It was not meant to be. What mattered was the emotions. The gathering of leaders and representatives was impressive. Most of them cherished memories of King Hussein in their hearts. Many had lukewarm relations with him. Nevertheless, they all wanted to pay homage to the man who, even in his death, could bring divided people together.

HERALD STANDARD

THE PRESENCE of four American presidents at Hussein's funeral was a dramatic demonstration of the respect the US had for Hussein, and the importance it attaches to Jordan as an ally. Jordan is more than an ally of convenience. There are strong ties with America: Abdullah attended prep school and college here; and the Jordanian people enjoy rights the US espouses. We are a generous benefactor of Jordan; and US diplomatic, financial and political support should be mustered to insure that King Abdullah is able to continue his father's policies. Jordan's origins may have been artificial, but it has become a very real and very positive presence in the Mideast.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

EVERYONE in the Middle East - and in Washington, London and Moscow - was furious at Hussein at one time or another, but he proved as skillfully evasive as a hummingbird, always darting to safety just as the pressures of the day seemed about to overwhelm him. He stayed in power longer than any other Mideast ruler because of his unsurpassed ability to balance the competing pressures on him.

OSCAR NOMINATIONS

British views on the success of the British film industry in this year's nominations for the Academy Awards

THE SUN

THE OSCAR nominations may have been a huge hit for our actresses - but they are a slap in the face for the men. But for all that, it's still set to be a superb Oscars for the Brits. Way back in the middle of last year, everyone and their dog new the Best Picture nomination was always going to include *Saving Private Ryan*. But for *Elizabeth* and *Shakespeare in Love* to make it is extraordinary considering the American competition they have seen off.

THE GUARDIAN

IF ANYONE is tempted on Oscar night to make another of those "the British are coming" speeches, please don't. The reason is simple. Yes, there is a heavy flow of films and other programming from Hollywood and, yes, the size of the US domestic market helps explain the cost advantage American shows enjoy overseas. But



there's a strong counter-current. British Equity may apply some restriction on movement but the flight of actors and expertise in both directions runs thick and fast; witness the made-at-Pinewood battle scenes in *Private Ryan*. Nobody stands on Broadway and says the British are coming because they have been a strong force in US drama for ages.

DAILY TELEGRAPH

It's shaping up as a good Oscar year for films made in Britain

- if not for British film. There is a difference. The nominations highlight the depth of talent among casts and crews here. Yet, for all its apparent Englishness, because of its financing, *Shakespeare in Love* can justifiably be called American. Its subject matter is quintessentially English. Most of its cast, director and co-writer are British. It was shot near London. But there is not a penny of British money in it.

DAILY MAIL

THE PHENOMENAL success of the British film *Shakespeare in Love*, in this age of supposedly "dumbed-down" public entertainment, seems remarkable. Who would have thought that a movie about an Elizabethan playwright, so often derided as "elitist" or "obscure" by our cultural leaders, would have secured no fewer than 13 Oscar nominations, including best film. (Leo McKinty)

THE DEATH OF IRIS MURDOCH

Comment following the death of Dame Iris Murdoch after suffering Alzheimer's disease

COURIER TIMES

IRIS MURDOCH wrote with wit and flair about such difficult topics as murder, suicide, incest, blackmail, betrayal and the other strains love puts on morality. But in addition to her literary legacy, her later years made another difficult topic less taboo - Alzheimer's disease. Iris Murdoch and John Bayley have made Alzheimer's that much less of a taboo, and open discussion of a disease is a step toward its ultimate cure.

THE GUARDIAN

WE NEED to recall Iris's amazing strength of artistic ideas, of invention, of charm and intelligence. Those are the things that those who knew her will remember most about her. And they are all there in the marvellous storehouse of her novels, covering so many characters, so many lives, so many

affairs, so many fantasies, and so many years - to which we should now do well to return. (Malcolm Bradbury)

THE SUN

WRITER DAME Iris Murdoch dies at 79. Her husband, John Bayley, might fear ordinary folk will forget her quickly. But he would be wrong. Britain still treasures its writers. And she was one of our finest.

THE TIMES

A QUIET exit like Iris's is the trend. It was typical of the modest Iris Murdoch that on her death she didn't want any fuss. No grand funeral or aggrandising memorial. A philosopher, intellectual, acclaimed novelist, she had no doubt considered the manner of her passing and decided she would like to go quietly. (Viviana Bennett)

RESTRICTIONS IN GIBRALTAR

Spanish comment on Britain's reaction to restrictions on travel to and from Gibraltar

EL PAIS

LACK OF results from a constructive policy on Gibraltar has pushed the Spanish Government into taking extreme measures to restrict the parasitic economy of the Rock, and the lives of those who live there. It's not a case of bending the willpower of the Gibraltarians, but of smashing it. But the problem is not only the Rock, it's also London.

ABC

THE BRITISH Government's protest against the measures adopted by Spain over Gibraltar are simply repeating an old error. An error which it now plans to take to the European Union. If Britain values supranational institutions so highly, it shouldn't undermine the United Nations General Assembly's clear doctrine on the legal need to decolonise the last, anachronistic bastion of colonialism on the continent of Eu-

rope. People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones. Through the false British argument, always based on the wishes - artificial and heavily influenced - of the Gibraltarians, shine the UN's repeated declarations. It's the Spanish Government which has reason to protest against Britain, and to take any necessary action against it.

EL MUNDO

SOME BRITISH MPs have asked Tony Blair to send the Navy to Gibraltar. What for? To protect the Gibraltarians against landings by Spanish fishermen who want to take the monkeys' hostage until London agrees to revoke the Treaty of Utrecht? It's ridiculous. What's at stake now has nothing to do with grand questions of principle, but with the strange state in which the Rock exists, defying not only the oldest agreements, but also the most current Community law.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK



"I can sit rhapsodising about a single strand. I can tell exactly who has styled a photograph, just from the shoot, just from the way a curl is placed." Nicky Clarke (pictured), hairdresser to the stars

"I can't speak in sound bites. I refuse to repeat slogans. I hate focus groups. I absolutely hate image consultants." Kenneth Clarke, Former Tory Chancellor

"It was all too much, so I'm the white wine queen again." Louri Turner, TV presenter on an attempt to give up drinking

"I am not going to be a nagging bag. I am here to make him happy." Victoria Adams, Spice Girl, on her fiancé David Beckham

"I hope some other mother would do for my daughter what I did for Monica." Linda Tripp

"This marks an end of the something-for-nothing welfare state." Tony Blair, Prime Minister

MISCELLANEOUS

Stories from around the world

DETROIT NEWS

"There's no there there," said Gertrude Stein, referring to Los Angeles. With the demolition of the old Hudson's building, it's pretty clear that "downtown" Detroit has no there there, either. The urban center is empty, and tumbleweeds blow down the avenues. But a dynamic region has to have some downtown, somewhere. So if "downtown" Detroit isn't downtown anymore, where is it? Some would argue Metro Detroit has no there at all. They come in from cities with a lot of there in their downtowns - and don't see any THERE at the riverfront and figure that there probably isn't any. But they are wrong. Detroit has a

huge downtown, but it's scattered all over the place.

POTSDOWN MERCURY

WHEN THE members of the school's student board decide to "clean up" a neighborhood, they really clean it up. About 12 of them were on hand to clean up the former site of a funeral home. There were no drug dealers in sight in the violent area as students cleaned. What was in evidence was the product traded with such deadly frequency on the corner. Asked what kind of drugs they found, one junior said "I don't know, stuff. I guess we don't know our drugs very well."

RESEARCH BY SALLY CHATTERTON

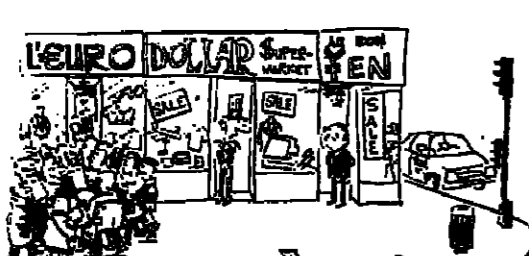
THE VIEWS OF THE WORLD



PHILADELPHIA DAILY NEWS



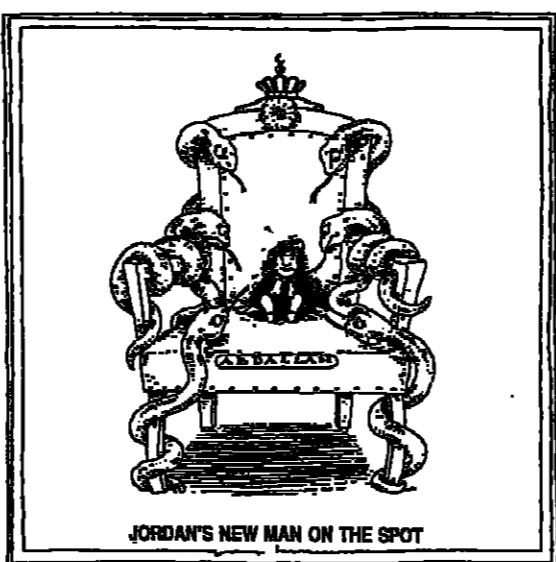
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LE MONDE



MORNING HERALD



HET PAROOL

Foul play on the sleeper to Fort William

DON'T TALK to me about train journeys from hell. There's no point - you wouldn't get a word in edgeways. I collect nightmare train journeys as other people collect beer-mats and while my sympathy genuinely goes out to the woman who took 18 hours and five changes to get from Macclesfield to Eastbourne last week (though why anyone should choose to make such a *recherche* journey I can't say), compared to my litany of disasters she was joy-riding.

I see ScotRail came out pretty well in the latest rail league tables for punctuality and reliability. Never mind punctuality and reliability, what about availability? It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a harassed mother with a family railcard to book four sleepers to Fort William. I know because I have been trying to do this for three weeks ever since the fisherman who lives down the road from our holiday house on an island in Loch Linnhe telephoned to say that our roof was blowing off.



SUE ARNOLD
Even the sheep turned nasty, demanding free champagne with their complimentary dinner

cat-basket - they all have to go into your sleeper with you. None of this matters because taking the sleeper to Fort William has to be one of the

most exhilarating experiences on earth. The discomfort of climbing over two mountain bikes to get to the basin to brush your teeth falls into insignificance when you gaze out of the window at Monassie Gorge or the snow-capped peaks of Aonach Mòr.

There is an alternative if the Fort William sleeper is full. You can get the Virgin West Coast sleeper to Glasgow and continue your journey by bus or local train. You can, but if I were you, I wouldn't. I did it one summer and bear the scars to this day. We were coming back from the island. We had taken the post-bus to the ferry, the ferry to Oban, the Sprinter to Glasgow and having fortified ourselves with fish suppers at The Blue Lagoon, we were now, at 10.30pm, ready to board the train at Glasgow Central.

There it stood at platform one, doors invitingly open, buffet car already full of late-night tipplers. Then came the announcement. The sleeper had been cancelled. We would all be put up at the Station Hotel and flown to London in the morning. Why had it been cancelled? No one seemed to know. There was dark talk of foul play in a siding at Watford Gap. There was darker talk that there simply weren't enough passengers to justify running a whole sleeper to Euston.

All told we numbered around 20 and immediately polarised into two groups, sheep and goats. The sheep said they'd go to the hotel, the goats said they wouldn't. It was now midnight. The hotel would include complimentary dinner, breakfast and use of the gym. The Virgin

spokesman coaxed the goats. "What about women?" someone shouted. The goats stood firm. One of them had telephoned the Watford Gap siding and discovered there was no foul play. Virgin just didn't want to run the train. Tempers rose, the kids in the party were curled up on the platform asleep.

Even the sheep were turning nasty, demanding free champagne with their complimentary dinner and free facials in the morning. Never mind facials, what about fulfilling their statutory obligations and getting us to London on the sleeper? shouted the goats.

In the end we compromised. Virgin would take us to London but not on that particular train. No, it wouldn't exactly be a sleeper but they would give us free tea and coffee and half-bottles of wine to

make up for any inconvenience. At 2.55am a very old, very shabby train shambled slowly up to platform one. You could see the driver wiping the grime from the windscreen. You could write your name in the dust on the tables. We were issued with blankets, the heating wasn't working, and shortly before 3am we inched our way slowly south out of Glasgow Central.

"I wish you'd all stop knocking Virgin," said a man I know who designs greenhouses. "I took the Virgin cross-country from Haslemere to Leamington Spa the other day and it was brilliant - dead on time, trolley service." Macclesfield to Eastbourne? No wonder the Virgin West Coast Line isn't up to scratch. They have just got too much on their plate.

THE SATURDAY PROFILE

RHODRI MORGAN, MP FOR CARDIFF WEST

The clown prince of Wales

THE PROBLEM with Rhodri Morgan is that he has failed the Hyacinth Bucket test in BBC's *Keeping Up Appearances*. Impeccably middle-class he might be but, unforgivably, he is an intellectual, he is often informally dressed and he is clearly not English - unsurprising in view of the fact that he is standing for election next Saturday as leader of the Labour Party in Wales, and hence First Secretary in the Welsh Assembly.

The final nail in his political coffin, as far as Hyacinth is concerned, however, is that his house near Cardiff is an absolute tip. It looks as if its contents have been arranged by a small explosive device.

Most days chez Morgan there is a liberal sprinkling of books, papers and boxes - sometimes there are even half-eaten comestibles. His wife Julie, a feminist and MP for Cardiff North, certainly does not believe it is her function to resort to the feather duster any more than Morgan does.

New Labour does not approve of this. They might venture - in fact, they do - that Morgan's chaotic approach to matters domestic is a symptom of his harum scarum politics.

Alun Michael, who Tony Blair and his apparatchiks have decided to support, is a different kettle of fish entirely. Neat house, neat clothes, neat mind. As one Labour activist in Abercynon, south-east Wales says: "If you put a pound in Alun's slot, you'll get a quid's worth out. If you put a pound in Rhodri's slot, you might hit the jackpot or you might get bugger all back."

New Labour has a problem in its attempt to suppress the unsound Morgan. Every time members of the Party and unions in Wales are asked who they want to lead Labour in the principality, Morgan turns out to be the man by a significant margin. The only votes being secured by Michael are coming from union activists in proverbial smoke-filled rooms, and from MPs who are operating under the New Labour whip. It is a profound embarrassment to the Blair camp, and it may prove to be a fatal weakness in the longer term, even if Michael manages to be elected.

Despite his origins in north Wales, Michael is unable to shake off the image as someone who has alighted from a silken parachute with Millbank printed on it. Morgan, in comparison, is seen as the homegrown candidate with the necessary touch of south Walesian extroversion.

The Prime Minister has been to Wales three times recently to show his support for Michael, but it is becoming counter-productive. Unlike the Mrs Buckets of this world, the Welsh feel they do not need to be wooed, cajoled and told how to vote. Many of them quite simply resent it.

Resentment was not a foreign emotion to Morgan's ancestors, who were a restless and rather colourful clan. Indeed, at one stage, they combined radical political action with cross-dressing. One of them, Morgan Morgan of Pontardulais, was one of the leaders of the Rebecca riots of 1840

in which agricultural workers disguised themselves as women and smashed up toll gates erected by private companies and landowners. Rhodri went to the trouble of taking his extended family on a visit to the area, where he explained their turbulent provenance.

Rhodri's father was largely unaffected by the insurrectional gene. He was a teacher of Welsh at the University of Wales at Cardiff, and later he switched to the Swansea campus where he became vice-principal. His mother, who is now in her nineties, was among the first women to attend Swansea University.

LIFE STORY

Origins: Born 29 September 1939, in Cardiff.

Education: St John's College, Oxford (BA philosophy, politics, economics) and Harvard University (master's degree in Government).

Political Career: Elected Labour MP for Cardiff West in 1987. Made Opposition spokesman on energy in 1988 and was front-bench spokesman on Welsh affairs 1992-97. Appointed chairman of Select Committee on Public Administration 1997.

Family: Married Julie Morgan, MP for Cardiff North, in 1967. Three children: two daughters, Mari born 1968 and Siani, 1969. One adopted son, Stuart.

Supporters say: "He's the people's choice."

Critics say: "He is very amusing, very knowledgeable, but he suffers from verbal incontinence."

Hobbies: Wood carving, long-distance running.



Mari, the elder of Morgan's two daughters, is a research scientist, and her sister, Siani, works for Shelter, the housing charity. The family tends to close ranks around Morgan's adopted son Stuart, who was charged with living off immoral earnings in 1988, burglary a year later, and then supplying cannabis. He is now studying at the University of Glamorgan.

A fluent Welsh speaker, Rhodri grew up in Radyr on the outskirts of the principality's capital, where his family imbued him with a taste for learning. He is by no means the typical south Wales boy of English legend - not one of the valley boys whose fathers worked down the pit, but who strug-

gled to send their children to university. Morgan is part of Wales's meritocratic aristocracy - or *crachach* to use the slightly pejorative Welsh word.

Nevertheless, he went to the local primary school - the Welsh upper-middle class has never taken to fee-paying schools to the same extent as the English. Performing wonders in the 11-plus examination, he secured a place at Whitchurch grammar school, where he cheerfully boasts to having been top, or near top, in most subjects except science.

Rhodri's introduction to politics was somewhat gentler than that experienced by the hosts of Rebecca, but none the less cathartic. At the age of 11 he insisted that his mother take him to a political meeting near their home. There he witnessed a local female Labour supporter being reduced to tears by a crowd of public school Tory thugs. "I remember thinking, 'I'm going to nail those bastards,'" he says.

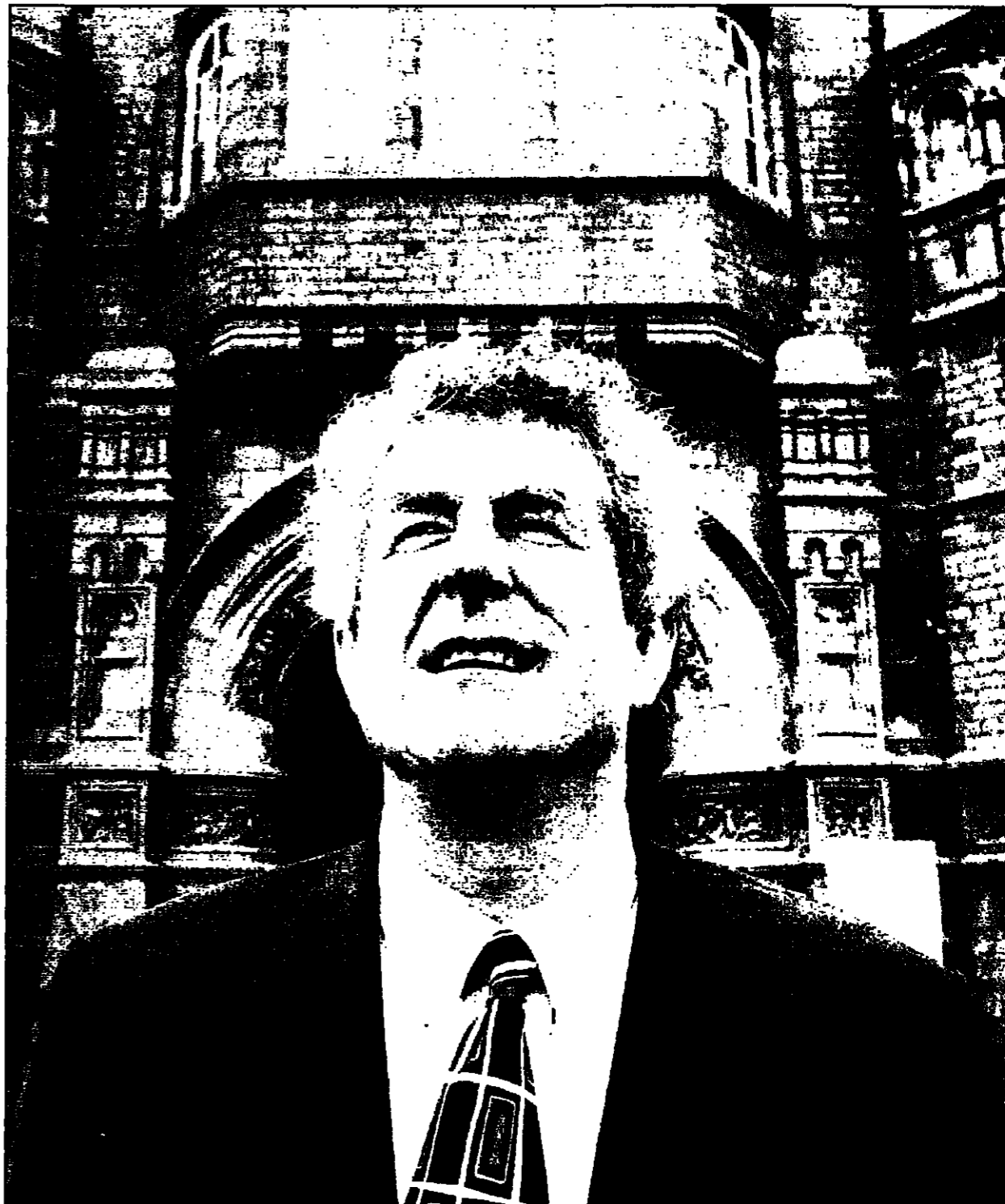
He waited some time before avenging the poor woman. He was very much a late starter as far as full-time politics were concerned. He went up to Oxford and thence to Harvard University, where he took a master's degree in government. In common with Neil Kinnock, he spent some time as a Workers' Education Association lecturer in south-east Wales, sharing a flat with that other great Welsh political extrovert who failed to win the approval of the English.

Morgan worked as an industrial development officer for south Glamorgan county council for six years from 1974, and he was then the European community's representative in Wales from 1980 to 1987, when he was elected MP for Cardiff West. It has not gone unnoticed that he has chosen to live just outside the constituency. Although his political patch is "mixed", it contains some of the toughest council estates in Wales, suffering from all the usual problems of the inner city. In fact, Morgan lives in Michaelstone Le Pit, Wales's answer to Islington.

He has a deserved reputation for wit, although self-deprecation is not usually an ingredient. The appointment of Thatcherite John Redwood as Secretary of State for Wales seemed to be a legitimate target for satire. The decision by the Conservative Government was actually seen by Morgan - and the few Welsh people who cared to give it a minute's thought - as a practical joke.

On hearing the announcement, Morgan immediately challenged the Welsh Secretary to pronounce the longest place name in Britain: Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwllantysiliogogogoch. Redwood was given three days to master the word, but preferred to ignore the challenge. Redwood caused Morgan to shake with uncontrollable laughter when he attempted to sing the Welsh national anthem, and instead performed a serviceable imitation of a river trout.

Morgan's reputation for humour - sometimes perceived as flippancy - was under-



Mr Morgan at the Pierhead Building in Cardiff, a proposed site for the new Welsh Assembly Rob Stratton

derlined when he was asked last year whether he would be standing in the election to become leader of the Labour Party in Wales: "Do one-legged ducks swim in a circle?" he replied.

The *bonhomie* is currently masking deep disappointment - some would say bitterness - over the fact that Tony Blair failed to give him a ministerial post after Labour won the general election. Morgan was part of the team shadowing Tory Welsh Office ministers and should have passed seamlessly into government. He was given the chairmanship of the Commons Committee on Public Administration as a consolation prize. Morgan's life hitherto had been effortless, according to his detractors, unmarked by any significant public failure.

Even Morgan's enemies in Wales say Blair was wrong. "If ever there was a case of when it was better to have someone in the tent pissing out, this was it," said one of his critics. The detractor went on to damn him with faint praise by suggesting that a junior ministerial post would be quite taxing enough for his political skills.

His chairmanship of the Commons committee has not enhanced his reputation at Westminster. He is regarded as "woolly and diffuse", and guilty of "verbal incontinence". Fellow Welshman Kinnock

will testify to the potentially damaging nature of such criticisms. Observers believed that his chairmanship of the committee allowed Alastair Campbell, the Prime Minister's press secretary, to emerge largely unscathed from a hearing into the legitimacy of his private briefings to journalists. Old Westminster hands, most of whom do like him, accuse him of being chaotic. He is often late for appointments, turning up with at least two bags, one of which will be full of papers and the other overflowing with sports gear. Morgan combines a liking for woodcarving with a regime of ruthless jogging.

A spell as deputy to Tony Blair as an opposition energy spokesman finally cast him into outer darkness from New Labour's point of view. The two men simply could not get on.

While there is a significant difference between Morgan and Michael in terms of personality, there is not an ha'porth of difference between their political philosophies. Both are right-wingers in Labour's terms, although Morgan has never really been a cheerleader for the New Labour project. "If I use the phrase 'new Labour' it is with a small 'n'," he says.

His main political interests lie in regional development, health, the environment

and European affairs. But the one policy that causes a flutter in the New Labour dove-cotes is his preoccupation with freedom of information. The "control freaks" at London Labour Party headquarters find it most worrying. Predictably, it was a policy much trumpeted by Labour in opposition, but rarely referred to these days. Morgan intends to pursue a relentless policy of *glasnost* as soon as he is in a position to do so.

Morgan is also a quango-phobe who has hounded those in semi-official positions who have feasted themselves on public money. "There are more quangos in Cardiff than gondolas in Venice," he has remarked, and he is determined to set about a cull. It is an attitude that has not endeared him to the great and the good in Wales, but strikes a chord with the electorate.

The election is difficult to predict, but come what may, Morgan will not go away. There is even a contingency plan about to form a coalition of Morganites and Plaid Cymru representatives at the Assembly who would vote Michael out and The Unsound One in. Morgan will follow the injunction of Dylan Thomas and refuse to "go gentle into that good night".

BARRIE CLEMENT

ACCIDENTAL HEROES OF THE 20TH CENTURY

27: ANN-MARGRET, ACTOR

IT ISN'T every actress who can survive a movie that requires her to writhe around under the overcooked direction of Ken Russell. For Glenda Jackson the shame was clearly so great she became an MP. But Ann-Margret, who - for no immediately apparent reason - is made to disport herself in a bath-tub of baked beans in Russell's inebriated version of *The Who's Tommy* in 1975, came through the experience with her customary serenity.

It may have helped that Ann-Margret was not without a bit of previous in the writhing department. In 1966, she made a comedy called *The Swinger*, in which she played the author of a racy autobiography. Because the Hollywood version of the Swinging Sixties - created by bald-

ing paunchy movie producers who were not particularly swinging but often sixty - usually involved the casual humiliation of women, Ann-Margret became a human paintbrush, at one point covering herself in paint and wriggling around on a blank canvas.

At the age of 25, Ann-Margret's career was believed to be in terminal decline. Yet a few years earlier Ann-Margret Olsson, who came to America from her native Sweden as a child, was America's teen sweetheart. The Theatre Owners of America voted her Star of the Year in 1964 after her success in *Viva Las Vegas* opposite Elvis, the most provocative partner Presley ever had and the only one with whom you could believe he actually slept.

He may very well have done in fact. They certainly had a romance, but her biography, *Ann-Margret: My Story*, is full of tasteless fables leaving us no closer to knowing how far she and the King went. A similarly discreet veil is pulled over her relationships with other early Sixties heavy hitters, including John F. Kennedy and Frank Sinatra.

Kennedy certainly saw her as a replacement for Marilyn Monroe. In 1963, the year after Marilyn's famously breathy *Happy Birthday Mr President*, JFK chose Ann-Margret to pay him a similar tribute. There were also other parallels between the two actresses: unsuitable men, alcohol, and prescription drugs.

With her career reduced by the late Sixties to Italian potboilers, barely exhibited in America, you would not have staked much on Ann-Margret's future.

But Ann-Margret re-wrote the script. She refused to be used and abused by men in the way that Marilyn was. An article in an early Sixties fan-mag hints at the steel behind the pout. "Ann-Margret sweeps men off their feet," the writer gushes. "She goes on breaking hearts and making men miserable. Many a big game hunter has had better luck with lions than with this tantalizing tigress."

On screen she returned triumphantly in *Carnal Knowledge* in 1971, the first really serious movie she had ever done, with a moving display of vulnerability as Jack Nicholson's ill-used mistress.

She married Roger Smith, an actor from the television show *77 Sunset Strip*, a marriage that has endured more than 30 years, with Smith acting as her agent and looking out for her like a mother hen. She has never wanted for work. Superior TV movies are what she does mostly these days, including a biography of Pamela Harriman, former wife of Randolph Churchill and so-called "courtesan of the century", who triumphed as her own woman after her last husband died, and was appointed American ambassador to France.



THE WEEKLY MUSE

BY MARTIN NEWELL



Slyly fall the flakes of snow
And dust the car tops patchy white.
A wimpy, disappointing snow
For those who like the change in light
And kids who sleigh in sleep all night.

Put out a call for Desperate Dan,
He may well come in handy.
The racist accusations fly
And fall upon... *The Dandy*.
The Irish claim it's not PC -
A new boy on their pages,
"O'Diddle", who's a leprechaun
Accused of fresh outrages.
He makes the race seem stupid,
Which has fanned the situation
From flight of silly nonsense
To a larger conflagration.
A hugely rated race of poets,
The Irish take all credit.
The Dandy, though? I'd no idea
So many of them read it.

And Ofsted in the news again...
Unfortunate position,
Police to their profession
Or a type of Inquisition?
Let's go and ask a teacher
On edge of nervous breakdown,
Poised between the paperwork
And bureaucratic shake-down:
"There's something in the Woodhead -
Or should they make him go?"
I'm sorry, didn't hear you,
Was that a yes or no?

His favourite colour's purple,
His handbag's red and patent:
Is Tinky Winky closet?
It's possible he's blatant,
Says Reverend Jerry Falwell,
Who's issuing a warning
To guard all US children
From "Eh-oh" in the morning.
Sounds good to me, old fruit-bat,
So here's the deal we'll make:
We'll keep our Teletubbies
And you keep Ricki Lake.

The lion and the unicorn
Were in the Rose and Crown.
"You realise," the Lion remarked,
"That cig sales may go down."
The By Appointment logo
On packets means a lot.
"Yeah, right," the Unicorn replied.
"D'you wanna fag, or what?"

THE WEASEL

After negotiating some well-endowed ladies of the art world, I was surprised to observe mass hanky panky in a Scarborough car park

HOW I wish the National Gallery would abandon the audio guides it provides for special exhibitions. Negotiating the throng at the deservedly popular Ingres show is tough enough without the additional hazard of plugged-in spectators obeying the commands of their earpieces. With whirling CDs bizarrely dangling over their hearts, these sad souls resemble the robots in the movie *Metropolis*. Deprived of free will, they barge like dodgems into anyone in their path. When going to view the works of Ingres, a close encounter with well-endowed ladies is only to be expected, but it's a bit much when this takes the form of the bolton *formidable* of a middle-aged art-lover.

The aristos and *haute bourgeoisie* portrayed by Ingres have attained a sort of immortality through the brush and pencil of the master, but there is a price to be paid. It is doubtful if his subjects would be entirely pleased with the captions which accompany their portraits. We learn a contemporary opinion of the rather doxy-looking Lady Bentinck: "What a good natured, potato-headed woman she is." Similarly, the note accompanying the Countess de Tournon points out: "Her plain features are in no way idealised, indeed recent conservation has uncovered a mole on the bridge of her nose which an earlier restorer had touched out." However, no caption is required to draw attention to the whiskers of Madame Genevieve Bertin (the drawing appears in the catalogue but not the exhibition). As if appended by a particularly talented graffiti artist, her moustache is plain for all to see.

But how wonderfully the world of art has advanced in the 131 years since Ingres passed on to the heavenly academy. This was forcibly impressed on me by an item in a magazine last week which offered "Five artists to invest in". These artistic naps include a "high conceptualist" called Martin Creed, described as "an oasis of purity in a messy world". The work we are urged to buy is entitled *A Sheet of As Paper Crumpled into a Ball* (£150). I, in fact, have some empathy with this masterpiece. Before I invested in a computer 15 years ago, I produced numerous examples of a similar nature, often accompanied by an outpouring of profanities (the indubitable hallmark of a great creator). But since becoming adept with the "delete" key, I fear I have lost the art.

I AM loathe to query such a doughty defender of civil liberties as Geoffrey Robertson QC, but I was stopped in my tracks by a statement in his memoir, *The Justice Game*. After recalling the manifold absurdities of the *Oz* trial, Mr Robertson harks back to another foray against the monstrous forces of oppression: his successful defence of the Sex Pistols against a charge of indecency concerning the title of their hit waxing, *Never Mind the Bollocks, Here's the Sex Pistols*. Mr Robertson recalls how he was "enlisted to defend a particularly polite and studious young university graduate who sang under the sobriquet of Johnny Rotten".

It is not the description of Mr Rotten as "polite and studious" which raised my eyebrows, for he always strikes me as being a sensible, if pungently opinionated chap when I see him on the box. However, the idea of him being anything so staid as a university graduate will surely prompt many an ageing punk to shake their thinning mohicans in shocked disillusion.



They needn't worry. In his own memoir, *No Irish, No Blacks, No Dogs*, Mr Rotten describes how he dropped out of the education system prior to A levels, despite a fondness for English literature, in particular the works of T. S. Eliot, Wilde and Shakespeare. Probably it's as well that Mr Rotten packed in his studies, otherwise academic pedantry might have constrained his memorable rhyming of "the Queen" with "fascist regime".

DISPLAYING THE customary American knowledge of the world beyond the continental US, a leading stateside movie website offers the following synopsis of *Little Voice*. "An otherwise mute Londoner becomes an overnight sensation with her gift for vocal mimicry." Of course, this enjoyable film is very much set in Scarborough. Though Brenda Blethyn richly deserves her Oscar nomination for her furious portrayal of Jane Horrocks' uniquely horrible mum, I think it's a pity that the great Yorkshire resort didn't also receive a nomination. Admittedly, I may be a trifle biased because Weasel Villas North is just 10 miles away.

Mrs Weasel and I kept nudging each other throughout the film as we spotted familiar sights. There was Michael Caine driving his lipstick-red gas-guzzler past the Futurist Theatre where I forced Mrs W to see Ken Dodd last year. The exterior of Jim Broadbent's sleazy nightclub turned out to be at Cayton Bay, where Charlotte Brontë once romped before it became a caravan camp.

But the most outstanding scene utilised the car park at Scarborough's fish dock, where Mr Caine and Ms Blethyn tested the suspension of his vehicle with a spot of extra-mural coupling. ("Under the bloody stars," as Ms Blethyn poetically describes it). In fact, the film revealed a whole row of cars bouncing and creaking in this romantic milieu. It came as a surprise to me. Though this is the spot where I park when purchasing stocks of crus-

tacea from the shellfish stalls near by, there's always been more haddock than hanky-panky whenever I've been there.

AS YOU read this, Mrs W and self should be enjoying a weekend in Lille. "A busy textile town in the 19th century," my Hachette guide informs me, "with an urban proletariat whose wretched conditions were immortalised by Victor Hugo." Tempting, eh? We were prompted to hop across to northern France by the £99-for-two special offer currently being advertised by Eurostar. A rare coup for the Weasels, I gloated, until I hacked my way through the thicket of small print at the bottom of the offer. Sure, it's £99 unless you want to come back on a Sunday, in which case the price is jacked up to £119. Grrr!

However, I bucked up after reading a line of even smaller print which pointed out that this increase applies only to cosmopolitan types returning from the fleshpots of Paris and Brussels. Hayseeds who venture no further than Lille still only cough up £99 when returning on Sundays. Hurrah! Bless you, Eurostar. Except, a further infinitesimal proviso caught my eye. The offer didn't apply from 12-14 February, which is when we had to travel. "The cheapest you can do this weekend is £152.40 for two," trilled a Eurostar salesperson. Grrrr!

On receiving the tickets, I discovered that this includes £14.40 insurance, which I didn't ask for, but it would be tempting fate to cancel. All aboard for the sucker's special!

SPIRIT OF THE AGE

PAUL VALLELY

At the altar of the atheists

"WHAT AN irony," puffed a Dawkins-ite, as he walked into the vast auditorium of Methodist Central Hall, in central London, where this week his hero entered into a debate entitled "Has Science Killed the Soul?". Richard Dawkins, the professor of the public understanding of science at Oxford University, drew a crowd of 2,300 to hear him talk with his fellow neo-Darwinist, the American evolutionary psychologist Stephen Pinker.

However, there was no irony at all. The vast hall opposite Westminster Abbey was built in 1912 for evangelical rallies. And that was precisely what the great audience was here for - to celebrate a new faith in which neuroscience is the new metaphysics and doubt the new dogma. "The seats are unnumbered," said the ticket collector. "Just find your own." Here the survival of the fittest was the code for life. It was not much of a debate, it has to be said, for Dawkins and Pinker, as is so often the way with high priests, pretty much agreed with everything the other said. But that didn't matter. "The truth is not always to be found somewhere midway between two adversaries. When two people agree there is always the possibility that we might both be right," Dawkins chuckled. He did not seem to countenance the opposite possibility.

Has science killed the soul? If by that we mean what he called Soul 1, the answer was yes. The idea that we have a spiritual immortal part of ourselves

science has shown to be "circular and non-productive". But if we meant Soul 2 - the intellectual, aesthetic and artistic power within us - then science has awoken great new possibilities there.

Pinker was less elegant but gave more sense of thinking as he went along. He was also more radical. The mind is not animated by a godly vapour; it is, like the Apollo spacecraft, an enormously complex device crammed with other complex devices. But there is nothing in it beyond a collection of chemical interactions. The mind is just the physiological activity of the brain, there is no ghost in the machine. The complexity of human thinking is reflected by the 3 trillion synapses in the brain. But they were made not by God but by the processes of evolution. When part of the brain is destroyed - by a bullet or by Alzheimer's - part of the person goes.

Even Dawkins had trouble here. "You say it's an illusion that the mind is a single entity, Steve," he began, picking up on Pinker's notion that the mind is a whole load of processes which are distinct and often pull in different directions. How could this be? Pinker wasn't sure but was certain that finding out was only a matter of time. When science fully explained consciousness, sometime next century, then "Soul 1 will be finally killed off", Dawkins said.

Hang on, said a questioner from the floor, isn't that like saying that a TV programme is created by the innards of a TV set, when we all know that it is

in reality projected from somewhere outside? Dawkins, in response, told a dark joke about little men inside the TV but failed to address the substantive point that science can't explain the subjective side of life.

It was, he said, just a cheap debating trick to say that what science can't explain can be explained by some other discipline. Perhaps it can't be explained at all. God is just a product of the human desire for perceiving patterns, which was programmed into us because it helped human survival, but which, if not checked, makes us gullible suckers-up of New Age nonsense or the established religions, which are the same thing, only older.

But religion, suggested another questioner from the floor, does also offer consolation to the troubled. Science can't do that. No, said Dawkins, but who wants to be comforted by a falsehood? Surely it makes it all the more worthwhile to get up in the morning and use our brief time on the planet to try to understand what life is all about. He was just grateful to be alive, he said, to his biggest round of applause of the evening.

Grateful to whom he did not specify. The problem for atheists is that they are trapped in centuries of theistically conceptualised language, as is evident when they seem unable to find an alternative word for the "design" of things in nature.

Pinker, no doubt, would here say we are into the problem of making cate-



Richard Dawkins, the high priest of evolutionary theory

gory mistakes. It is like asking "What does a four-dimensional object look like?" or "What was there before the Big Bang?" or "What's outside the finite universe?". Such questions make no sense - they are mismatches. "It's not a problem of science," said Pinker. "It's a problem of how we feel."

That does not make the problem, for us humans, any less real, I felt as I came away. Dawkins and Pinker may be, as they were billed, the two great storytellers of modern science. But their yarns, while good on description, are a bit short on plot, and there is something barren and desolate about the landscape in which they are set.

Science and psychology may have killed off God 1 - the old bloke with the beard, the performer of magic who is a superhuman extrapolation from the limits of the single human form. But what about God 2 - the mysterious abstraction, the unknowable summation of the wisdom of mankind throughout the world and throughout the ages, the ground of our being?

The discoveries of science only magnify rather than diminish such a God. In the face of which, of course, the apt response is not smug uncertainty so much as an open humility. And there did not seem to be an awful lot of that around this week in Central Hall.

DAYS LIKE THESE

14 FEBRUARY 1831

FELIX MENDELSSOHN, composer (pictured), writes to his friend, Heinrich Barnmann, from Rome.



"In the last few days there has been the crazy carnival; the place swarmed with the craziest masks, the Italian women are at their most brilliant, people throw confetti at one another like mad, nosebags of roses and violets are thrown to the ladies in their carriages, and they reward one with a shower of bonbons and sugared almonds; the men have flour thrown at them till they look like miller's apprentices; but unfortunately the last three days, when everything is at its maddest, were lost for us.

"The day before yesterday, when I arrived on the Corso with a load of confetti, I found the whole street black with men, no ladies, not a mask to be seen, and at last I discovered, posted up at a corner, a papal edict proclaiming that the carnival was over, because of

inauspicious circumstances; in other words they claimed to have discovered a revolution, and soldiers with loaded guns had been posted in all the streets; that evening a few shots were actually fired, people were arrested, one man badly wounded. So the fun changed to bitter earnest; and although the fasting doesn't begin until the day after tomorrow, the streets are already silent."

19 FEBRUARY 1838

HENRI BEYLE, better known as the novelist Stendhal, writes to a friend:

"I shall tell you frankly, monsieur, that to write a

book which has the luck to find four thousand readers, one must:

1. Study French for two years in books written before 1700. I except only the Marquis de Saint-Simon;
2. Study the truth of the ideas in Bentham or Helvétius's *L'Esprit* and in a hundred and one volumes of memoirs: Gourville, Mme de Motteville, d'Aubigné etc.

In a novel, from the second page onwards, one must say something new or at least *individual*, concerning the setting of the action. From the sixth page onwards, or at the latest from the eighth, there must be adventures. The new rich lend energy to good society, just as the Barbarians did in the 11th century to what was left of Rome. We are very far from the insipidity of the reign of Louis XVI. At that time the style of narration could be more important than the contents; today the opposite is true.

Read the trial of Gilles de Laval, maréchal de Rais, at the Royal Library. Invent adventures of equal energy."

IAN IRVINE

The cause of a civilised Europe

"WE BEHOLD a country inferior in population to most of her continental neighbours, but multiplying her faculties and resources by her own activity and enterprise, by the vigour of her constitution, and by the good sense of her people; we behold her, after standing up against a formidable foe throughout a contest, in the course of which every one of her allies, and at times all of them together, have fainted and failed - nay, have been driven to combine with the enemy against her - we behold her, at this moment, rallying the nations of Europe to one point, and leading them to decisive victory.

If such a picture were the bright vision of speculative philosophy, if it were presented in the page of history of ancient times, it would stir and warm the heart. But, gentlemen, this country is our own; and what must be the feelings which arise, on such a review, in the bosom of every son of that country?

One of the most delightful poets of this country, in describing the various proportions of natural blessings and advantages dispensed by Providence to the various nations of Europe, turns from the luxuriant plains and cloudless skies of Italy to the rugged mountains of Switzerland, and inquires whether there also, in those barren and stormy regions, the "patriot passion" is found equally imprinted on the heart? He decides the question truly in the



CLASSIC PODIUM

From a speech delivered in Liverpool by George Canning, the former foreign secretary, on Britain's mission to rid Europe of despotism (10 JANUARY 1814)

affirmative; and he says of the inhabitant of those bleak wilds:

"Dear is that shed to which his soul conforms,
And dear that hill which lifts him to the storms;
And, as a child, when scaring sounds molest,
Clings close and closer to the mother's breast,

So the loud torrent and the whirlwind's roar,
But bind him to his native mountains more."

What Goldsmith thus beautifully applied to the physical varieties of soil and climate has been found no less true with respect to political institutions. A sober desire of improvement, a rational endeavour to redress error and to correct imperfection in the political frame of human society, are not only natural, but laudable in man.

Can any man now look back upon the trial which we have gone through, and maintain that, at any period during the last 20 years, the plan of insulated policy could have been adopted, without having in the event, at this day, prostrated this England at the foot of a conqueror? Great, indeed, has been the call upon our exertions; great, indeed, has been the drain upon our resources; long and wearisome has the struggle been; and late is the moment at which peace is finally brought within our reach.

But even though the difficulties of the contest may have been enhanced, and its duration protracted by it, yet is there any man who seriously doubts whether the having associated our destinies with the destinies of other nations, or be not that which, under the blessing of Providence, has eventually secured the safety of all?

For myself, gentlemen, while I

rejoice in your returning prosperity, I rejoice also that our connection began under auspices so much less favourable; that we had an opportunity of knowing each other's minds, in times when the minds of men are brought to the proof - in times of trial and difficulty.

I had the satisfaction of avowing to you, and you the candour and magnanimity to approve, the principles and opinions by which my public conduct has uniformly been guided.

I thought, and I said, at the time of our first meeting, that the cause of England and of civilised Europe must be ultimately triumphant, if we but preserved our spirit untainted and our constancy unshaken. Such an assertion was, at that time, the object of ridicule with many persons: a single year has elapsed, and it is now the voice of the whole world.

Gentlemen, we may, therefore, confidently indulge the hope that our opinions will continue to run in unison; that our concurrence will continue to be as cordial as it has hitherto been, if unhappily any new occasion of difficulty or embarrassment should hereafter arise.

At the present moment, I am sure, we are equally desirous to bury the recollection of all our differences with others in that general feeling of exultation in which all opinions happily combine.

THE SATURDAY ESSAY

A free imagination, or the tyranny of the mob?

CHRISTIAN SALMON

Ten years on, Rushdie has shown us how literature is forgotten amid the hatred of art that haunts this century

WHEN THE news came over the wire services on 14 February 1989 that a writer had been condemned to death, the whole thing seemed at first like a dreadful anachronism. But instead of a mystery which we could only comprehend through analogy – that of Inquisition victims burned at the stake – there was the face of a real man on the front pages of our newspapers and on our television screens. It was the face of a writer unknown to the general public, half English, half Indian, who stood out for his novel way of expressing a fascination with mixed origins and mixed lives.

Salman Rushdie has been caught up in an unprecedented political/literary affair which for 10 years now has kept the secret services of several countries, armies of diplomats and police, commandos of fundamentalists and an overexcited media busy. He could have become lost in a media mirror-world, where the greatest tragedies turn into virtual reality: witness the case of Diana, whose sorry destiny as a media star has been analysed on the pages of *Le Monde*. But he has escaped becoming a media victim, and first and foremost because he is a writer. Even as he led the struggle against terrorism by a state, he was waging another war against another fatwa – this one less clear cut and more difficult to win.

Those who promulgated this second fatwa were not the fundamentalist mullahs in Tehran, but politicians (sometimes progressive politicians), religious figures (sometimes the most enlightened ones) or even writers (John le Carré). Immediately after 14 February 1989 you could see them hurry to express their solidarity and understanding. Not, however, with a writer threatened with death by a terrorist state – but with “Muslims unjustly insulted over their religious convictions”.

One church leader saw a link between the Rushdie affair and the campaign which had been launched a few months earlier against Martin Scorsese's film *The Last Temptation of Christ*. Once again, he proclaimed, “believers are insulted over their faith: first Christians in a film which disfigures the image of Christ, now Muslims in a book about the prophet”. Monsignor John O'Connor, the Archbishop of New York, believed that Rushdie's book was offensive and asked Catholics not to read it. The Chief Rabbi of Israel, the Vatican and Margaret Thatcher also expressed their disapproval, while Jacques Chirac, the future president of France, unwisely declared that he had “no sympathy for Mr Rushdie. I have read what has appeared in the press (ie the first chapters of *The Satanic Verses*). It's pathetic.” But it was Mr Lustiger, a member of the Académie Française, who went furthest. He did not hesitate to state that “the figures of Christ and Mahomet do not belong to artists and their imagination” – thus incidentally writing off entire centuries of the history of painting.

Ten years on, the Rushdie affair has shown itself to be the final, and most theatrical, act of a tragedy of which all the protagonists – the media, the mullahs, “enlightened” Westerners and radical Islamists, leaders political and religious – have been one by one unmasked. Be it in Paris, New York, Rome or Jerusalem, literature has been forgotten; the fatwa has become steadily more acceptable and Salman Rushdie increasingly suspect. Only the talent, the courage, and the tireless presence of Salman Rushdie has allowed us to see what is really at stake in this affair: how literature is forgotten amid the hatred of art which haunts this century. It is a fatwa against fiction.

According to this fatwa, *Dead Souls* is an insult to the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. *Madame Bovary* is a



Muslims in Bradford burn *The Satanic Verses*, one of the protests that led to Ayatollah Khomeini declaring a fatwa on Salman Rushdie Asadour Guezlian

defence of adultery and Nabokov's *Lolita* – a novel which it would be impossible to publish today – is a defence of paedophilia. Or take Joyce's *Ulysses*, once described as “the literature of the lavatory” and as “literary Bolshevism”. It was published in Paris in 1922 but remained banned in the US until 1959 and in England until 1957. No matter that, throughout this period, pornographic books, anti-religious tracts and licentious pseudo-novels abounded. It's always literature which is persecuted.

But what's so threatening about fiction? Michel Foucault suggested that there are several levels of censorship: that which covers explicit content (for instance, a catalogue of blasphemous words) and that which covers forms of language that are deemed to go too far “not in their meaning, or in their verbal content, but in their interplay”. Into this forbidden and proscribed category fall de Sade, Joyce, Rushdie, Rabelais, Céline and Genet. The fatwa against Rushdie did not punish a crime of opinion. It punished a novel. And not just Rushdie's novel, but the genre of the novel in its entirety.

Nadezhda Mandelstam recounts Krushev's story of how Stalin once saw a famous actor on television playing the part of a traitor. Stalin was so impressed by the actor's skills that he declared only a real traitor could play the role so well – and ordered that the required measures be taken. Half a century later, on 13 February 1989, Ayatollah Khomeini was also watching television, and saw the Pakistani police open fire on demonstrators who were protesting against the publication in the US of a book entitled *The Satanic Verses*. Khomeini hadn't read the book but was so taken with the scenes of massacre on screen that he concluded that a book called *The Satanic Verses* could only be a satanic book, the sole purpose of which was blasphemy and insult. So he went into the next room and dictated his fatwa on the spot, requesting Muslims the world over “to put to death Salman Rushdie and his publishers, wherever they are found”.

It's hard to know whether the lesson of these tales is that tyrants are overimpressible or that they watch too much television. But they are proof anew of a failing

of literary history: a Don Quixote-like confusion between reality and fiction.

When Don Quixote interrupted a puppet show, took his sword and ran through two puppets because they were not behaving in keeping with the rules of chivalry, he was displaying the blindness of Stalin confronted by the actor/traitor. His rigid notion of chivalry denied him that minimum of distance from events, without which parody, the theatre, the very description of something else is impossible.

The crowds who gathered across the world to oppose publication of *The Satanic Verses* had not read the book. Like Khomeini they were reacting only to the title – as if *The Satanic Verses* were an anti-religious pamphlet and not a novel; thus do hundreds of thousands of Don Quixotes protest, without knowing it, against the behaviour of an individual, his dreams and his ideas. These are crowds ready to kill on account of beings which are merely the product of paper and ink. But how can you blame them when the West's political and media elites make the same mistake?

Great works stand out because of the uncertainty they plant in our minds. They do not involve the explicit excesses and obscenities which bring about bans and taboos. Instead, they change perceptions and touch the most sensitive themes, searching out, as Rushdie puts it, “new angles from which to penetrate reality”. They strive to create a different hierarchy of the senses, to make us look at ourselves in different ways. *The Satanic Verses*, after all, is not simply about various episodes from the Koran and the condemnation to death of its author, found guilty of having challenged God's word with his profane words and of having created confusion over identity and origins. It is a paean of love: to emigration, to cultural cross-breeding, to the sheer exotic richness of modern life. *The Satanic Verses* turns exile into a defining experience which allows the real world to be re-explored and a new world to be discovered. “America, a nation of immigrants, has created great literature out of cultural transplantation and the study of how people cope with a new world,” Rushdie writes.

Today, as a result of migration and nomadism, languages and cultures are

moving into a new age. Rushdie's novel testifies to this new and giddy diversity of the human condition, its entanglements and collisions. This is the new world to which *The Satanic Verses* tries to give shape, with all the attendant risks and surprises.

Rushdie's novel – and this is why it has burst so disastrously into the real world – is an attempt through fiction to gain a grip on the central question of modern life. The question is not the one which confronted writers like Flaubert, Balzac and Proust in their era: how do you enter society? Society then meant the Arnoux family for Frédéric in *L'Education sentimentale*, Rastignac's Paris in Balzac or the Guermites salon in Proust. The questions Rushdie asks are: how do you enter a world that is absolutely open? How do you come into the world when you belong to several worlds? What are you born as when you are a migrant? In other words, how do you find identity and individuality in a world where all identifications are equivalent and equally possible?

The Satanic Verses is the first great carnival novel of the era of globalisation. It is an immigrant's inside vision of the world – not as something distant and exotic, but with all the conflicts and contradictions that go with the immigrant's condition and the transformed awareness this implies. Perceptions change, not only of time and space, but of sexuality, culture, religion, even of one's own body.

The fall of a plane upon London in *The Satanic Verses* – which stands for a fall into our Western times and a fall out of a theocentric world – is the start of a process that reorders our notions of good and evil. Traditional values are not rejected. They crumble gradually. They continue to exist as memories, fetishes, left-overs, clichés. They are carried along, displaced and transformed, in the great swirl of forms and values that constitutes Rushdie's carnival. Kafka wanted to write the world history of a single soul. Rushdie, on the other hand, seeks to bring the great circus of globalisation alive, giving it form and people.

The essential job of fiction, according to Gilles Deleuze, is to invent a people which is missing. With Rushdie and his giants of immigration and the world, we are present at the birth of such a people. It is a people

of immigrants, scattered between London and Bombay. It is a people made up of men betrayed, because they have been “moved beyond their origin” and because their values and identities mix with each other and contaminate each other.

This is why the fatwa against Rushdie finds its supporters and not only in Tehran. For modern censorship is first and foremost the tyranny of conformity. Today, we persecute what is unformulated and unbelievable – everything that is different and heterogeneous, everything that is being born. It's not surprising, therefore, that in its focus on language, on the individual and his search for new forms of identity, the novel comes up against the drained but still fanatical mob, blindly following the prophets of purity in everything, turning back on their tracks in search of a lost identity, in a futile quest for origins.

The Rushdie affair is different from the Dreyfus case, which produced a clear demarcation between Dreyfusards and anti-Dreyfusards and in which the intelligentsia emerged as supreme defender of right and justice. The Rushdie affair has lacked that clarity because ultimately it has not been about defining *raison d'état* and forcing recognition of the fact that a man unjustly condemned is innocent. It is not about defending established rights or returning honour to a truth scorned. It is about the recognition of a right which cannot be precisely defined and which indeed has yet to be invented. This right involves another sort of compromise between literature and politics. It is the right to fiction, the right to depict things.

The Rushdie affair has become our affair. In some respects it has been played out in the shadows but it has made a huge impact none the less. A festering quarrel that is four centuries old, between literature on one side and religion and politics on the other, has been forced into the open at a global level. Far from being a passive victim, Rushdie has waged a daily war against fear. It has been a strange story of imagination disarmed yet insurgent – what Edward Said has called “an infatiga of the imagination”.

The author is secretary general of the International Parliament of Writers

BAROMETER

SEAN O'GRADY

Gay icon
Tinky Winky, one of the Teletubbies, has been “outed” by the fanatical religious crusader, the Reverend Jerry Falwell. The American preacherman says: “Tinky Winky is purple, the gay pride colour, and his antenna is shaped like a triangle, the gay pride symbol. I believe these subtle depictions are intentional and are damaging to the moral values of children.” The hunt is on for closet gays on children's TV. George, the pink hippo in *Rainbow*, and the campiest puppet in television history, had better watch out.

Gladiators vanquished
So farewell, then, Jet, Hunter, Wolf, Cobra, Nightshade and Lightning. And huge cotton buds. Wave a giant fingered sponge goodbye to the heady mixture of muscle power and glamour that was *Gladiators*. The ratings were fading and the fans got bored. Even the Prime Minister confessed two years ago that: “*Gladiators* was favourite viewing in our house. Now it's whatever happens to be on, sometimes *You Bet* or *Noel's House Party*.” But it was not for the want of trying by the LWT producers. One of them, Ken Warwick, alleged that he was told to persuade the male Glads to put bits of newspaper down their shorts.

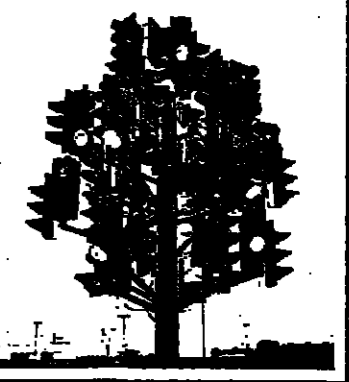
Ramrod Robin
This is Robin “Gladiator” Cook, obviously not a man who needs to stuff anything down his undies. Now, is that a police battering ram he's wielding, or is he just pleased to see us?

Mini camper
This is the Paul Smith “designer” Mini. Its multi-coloured paint job compliments the chubby features



of this automotive Teletubby, now on show at the Design Museum in London.

Image of the week
This new sculpture has been erected at a place called Westferry Circus, here at Barometer's home in Canary Wharf. The tree took six months to create and is the work of Anglo-French artist Pierre Vivant. Monsieur Vivant “planted” his tree on the spot where a real tree had died of pollution. Its 75 sets of lights flash red, amber and green in a cycle reflecting the changing colours of the leaves during the year. Potentially confusing to road users. Cost? £100,000.



Mr Laws triumphant

Sunday
Get up, it's extremely cold and I am worried that it will spoil my tennis. I'm on the court at 10, but it's so cold I can barely hold the racket. One of my friends from Unison rings to say that National Grid think they are going to have to repay the money they took from our pension fund.

Monday
I get a call in the morning to confirm the court number and start-time of 9.30 for Wednesday. This causes me some consternation, because we have sent out 1,200 letters to members of the Association of Electricity Supply Pensioners telling them it is a 10am start. This will cause difficulties over cheap day-returns. Some of the lovely East Midlands ladies call to say that the rail fare will

be 280; they apologise for not being able to come.

Tuesday
At bloody 8.30 the phone starts ringing. I get 50 calls from people committed to coming and some giving apologies. In the evening my girlfriend arrives with huge quantities of food from Marks & Spencer. I crack open a bottle of wine and put my feet up. Later I get out my suit with the mothballs. I am not particularly happy to be wearing a tie, as I haven't worn one in five years, but I think I should try and look reasonable as I might hit the TV.

I get a call from my solicitor, Peter Wood, to revise our meeting for 8am tomorrow. I watch the news before going to bed.

MY WEEK DAVID LAWS, CAMPAIGNER FOR THE PENSION RIGHTS OF ELECTRICITY WORKERS

Wednesday
Up at 5.30. I am lucky that my girlfriend has offered me a lift to the station. I am feeling reasonably confident. I arrive early at my solicitor's. Peter is still in his cycling gear when he tells me we've won. I let out a big yell, hug him and dance. My fellow campaigner Reg and his girlfriend arrive, and we study the judgment. I am delighted to find the decision is unanimous, a victory for 2,000 members in all the electricity companies in the country

– a victory for the ordinary man.

I am astonished to see how small the court is. There are about 60 members here, which is a joy to see: it's the breath of real people in this stuffy atmosphere. My emotions rise as the judges walk in; the size of the victory is beginning to dawn on me. The normal team from National Grid is missing; they are too embarrassed to turn up.

On leaving the court, there is a clamour of goodwill and congratulations, which is extremely touching.

I make every endeavour to stay together with Reg and Peter. Reg seems to have problems keeping up, but he is 75. All the press are there. I do a photo-call, with some astonishing posing.

Everyone goes to The George pub. Within 10 minutes, the barman tells me that the limit behind the bar from our fund has been reached; we rapidly agree to extend it.

I have an interview at Meridian TV for the six o'clock news. I feel like it hasn't gone well, but they seem happy. My girlfriend arrives unexpectedly. I'm in a happy mood and indulge in a cigar, a coffee and a brandy. I am determined to catch and video the news.

Thursday
Get up and listen to all my answer-

ing-machine messages from yesterday. They are heart-warming and congratulatory. Local radio and newspapers have also called but I know it's too late to call back. It was yesterday's news and today it ain't. Today is clear-up-the-house day, then I'm off to the town centre to do my shopping. In the evening I meet my girlfriend in the leisure centre bar. It's a nice end to the day.

Friday
I call Peter in the morning to speak about the case. I've left it a couple of days before calling him, to collect my thoughts. In the afternoon I make a guest list for a celebratory evening I'm arranging. I've got to be realistic, about 20 to 40 people, I don't want a wild party.

INTERVIEW BY DAISY PRICE

Gay men are tired of living in fear of Aids. So now they're turning risk into a thrill. By Andrew Gumbel

According to the San Francisco-based Stop Aids Project, which contributed much of the data for the CDC report, the rate of HIV infection appeared stable for now, but there was a sharp increase in cases of anal gonorrhea - not life-threatening in itself, but it increases the risk of HIV two to five times.

Robert Perez of the Stop AIDS Project, for example, insisted that backtracking was practised by "a tiny minority" of gay men as a whole, and insisted that, despite the disappointment of the CDC's latest figures, it was still an achievement for 60 per cent of gay men to use a condom during anal sex. But in this month's issue of the New York-based magazine *POZ*, written for HIV-positive men, journalist Michael



As part of his research, Scarce visited a barebacking house in the Castro district of San Francisco. He paid \$8 at the door, was invited to take his clothes off and signed a doc-

"I am surprised at POZ, not only for sensationalising the movement, but for not presenting a balanced

Meanwhile, the barebackers are asserting condom-free sex as something of a right. "After 18 years of living in doubt and crisis," a 36-year-old barebacking lawyer called Zach told Scarce, "men don't want to face a lifetime of wrapping themselves in latex." It remains to be seen how long such a defiant stance can last.

PARK LIFE



Football is, of course, more adaptable, which is one of the reasons for its universal appeal and its spread to parts of the globe too dry to have much grass, let alone mud.

I can't recall having observed or experienced conditions changing at such close quarters before, and it was certainly the highlight of my week. I know I'll never persuade Tom that he should play rugby, and that doesn't bother me. But I do hope he finds some way to enjoy getting cold and wet and muddy.

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Fifty years after their expulsion from Poland, the Germans are back. What are they after? And why? By Steve Crawshaw

The return of a nightmare

Admittedly, it does not look like a prize piece of property to argue over. A plain one-storey house, a brick shed, a couple of fruit trees. Ducks and geese wander forlornly across the frozen village pond; at one end of the village a huge stork's nest sits in solitary splendour in the fork of a tree; in the village stores, the selection of goods is almost as basic as in Communist times. In the village of Mosina, in north-west Poland, poverty is the rule. Most farmers can barely make ends meet – and they fear that things are getting worse.

But at least the land is theirs – or seemed to be, until recently. Jerzy Gawel and his family have lived in Mosina, south-west of Gdansk, for 50 years. They have no other home. Before 1939, however, Mosina – then known as Mossin – was part of Germany. The man who lived in Gawel's house as a child 50 years ago wants the farm back. The demand, and others like it, has opened up a can of political worms.

The letters from 60-year-old Herbert Wehry are suavely threatening. Wehry, an agricultural engineer from Paderborn in western Germany, sent copies of pre-war maps to bolster his claim to the property, which he left when he was five years old. In a four-page letter to the local mayor, he refers to international law – the Hague, the United Nations, Bosnia, you name it – and to the "painful but necessary" changes in law that Poland must make, including the "restitution of property to the Germans". If it wishes to be considered for membership of the European Union.

All of which might be dismissed as a bad joke – a green-ink letter written by a malicious eccentric – were it an isolated case. But it is not. Some of Wehry's demands for restitution are on pre-printed, bilingual forms. When I telephone Wehry, his wife says that he does not talk to journalists. But one thing is clear: thousands of such forms, distributed by an association of German expellees, have been filled in by those

who were driven out in 1945. Now that the Communists are gone, they have a chance of getting their hands on their property once more. Jerzy Gawel, whose father rebuilt the house from ruins after 1945, feels bewildered: "I'm just a little person." His 75-year-old mother, Natalia, is nervous. Wringing her hands in front of the house the German wants her to lose, she says: "They said we shouldn't be afraid – but who knows what will happen next?"

This is unfinished business, as far as the Germans are concerned. In 1945, the Western Allies agreed to pick Poland up and dump it to the west, so as to keep Stalin happy by giving him more *lebensraum*. The Oder-Neisse line – named after the two rivers that mark the post-war Polish-German border – made little objective sense. But nor did much else at that time. Poland lost a

'We don't trust the Germans – they'll take us, not by war, but with money'

quarter of a million square miles in the east, and gained swathes of German territory in the north and west in return.

The expulsions remained a raw German wound. A post-war West German school history book referred to "terrible suffering, such as the world no longer considered possible in the 20th century". Grotesquely, the reference was not to Auschwitz, nor to any other aspect of Nazism, but to the painful expulsion of Germans from their homes.

There is what might be called a Serbian quality to this German sense of victimhood: an awareness of their own (real) suffering, and a determination to ignore the suffering of others. Put the ultimate crime of Auschwitz to one side for a moment. Put to one side six years of



Uneasy peace: the Polish village of Mosina used to be the German village of Mossin

Tom Pilsten

routine brutality against Poles – who were "more like animals than human beings" in Hitler's view.

Even if one addresses only the narrow question of ethnic cleansing, Germany started the ball rolling, only weeks after the invasion of Poland in 1939. In the words of Thomas Urban, the German journalist and historian: "More than a million Polish citizens were affected. Most of them were dragged out of their beds at night; they could only take the bare necessities with them in their rucksacks, and had

to head for the east in cattle trucks."

Anna Perlek was 12 years old when the Germans arrived in the village of Przyrowa, just across the border from Mosina into pre-war Poland, in 1939. She is close to tears as she tells a familiar story from that time: "They took the village teacher and shot him. He was such a good man. They took him, they took the priest. They murdered them all – and we're supposed to forget it. We should – but it's difficult." The remaining inhabitants of the village were forced out, minus their pos-

sessions, so that Przyrowa could become a "decent", Pole-free zone. As far as Anna Perlek is concerned, the Germans who were thrown out six years later had it easy. But that is not the way it seems to the Germans.

Some are still keen to pick at the old historical sores, however, under the guise of sorting things out. The German parliament, the Bundestag, complained last year of the "great injustice in violation of international law" suffered by the expellees, and insisted that Poland must change its property laws if it wished to "help

overcome the consequences of war and expulsion". Poland exploded with anger at what it saw as a deliberate provocation: the Polish parliament retorted with an almost unanimous condemnation of the "dangerous tendencies" of the Bundestag resolution. The new social democrat chancellor, Gerhard Schröder, wants to stay sweet with the powerful lobby of the Federation of Expellees: he will give the keynote speech at the Federation's 50th anniversary celebrations in May. Federal German Republic in May.

For many Germans, the renewed interest in the eastern territories is mere nostalgia. Bookshops across the country are full of lavishly illustrated books depicting the woods, lakes and broad shady avenues of the former German lands of Pomerania and east Prussia. At an official level, too, Germany is not keen to be seen as the Big Bad Wolf of the region.

There is a loophole, however. Agricultural land in Poland is cheap – and Germany insists that, under EU rules, Germans and others must be allowed to buy Polish land freely. As far as the Poles are concerned, that is equivalent to the point in a Monopoly game where one player owns hotels on Piccadilly Park Lane and Mayfair, while another owns nothing but a mortgaged Whitechapel and Old Kent Road. From that point on, the game's ending is predetermined. The Poles feel that the Germans are rich and getting richer. The Poles are poor and – especially if they lose the property that they still hold – doomed to get poorer still.

Some are unbothered by the property claims and by the non-stop stream of German visitors. Thirty-eight-year-old Leszek Kicinski speaks warmly of the family who once lived in his home in Mosina, and who regularly come to visit, bringing gifts for the children. "They're very kind. We've been to stay with them in Hamburg several times. If we don't write, they ask us, 'Have we said something to offend you?'" Others are glad for the extra income that German visitors bring.

For others, however, this is the return of a nightmare. In some respects, Poland is increasingly anchored in the West. Next month it joins Nato; in a few years' time, it looks set to join the European Union. In Mosina, however, Anna Perlek feels only angry despair. "We don't trust the Germans, and we never did," she says.

"They'll take us – not by war, but by money. I don't want anything from them – I just want them to leave us in peace. But they'll come anyway, and they'll get it all for free."

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Corona North

CORONA NORTH turned the wilderness she inherited at Altamont, Co Carlow, into one of the great gardens of Europe. Her single-minded passion has evoked comparison - with certain qualifications - with Scarlett O'Hara's at Tara.

When, in 1983, Isobel Lecky-Watson died at the age of 101, she bequeathed Altamont House and 140 acres of beautiful but mostly unserviceable land on the banks of the Slaney to her two daughters, Diana and Corona. Everyone - not least Corona's husband, Gary, and Diana herself - assumed that the estate would be sold and that the proceeds would ensure a comfortable and leisurely old age for the two sisters.

They had not banked on Corona. A passionate plantswoman, she set about restoring the largely derelict gardens, took the arable land back in hand and, by dint of her own unceasing labours and by chivvying, bullying and cajoling others, contrived to turn Altamont into one of the best-loved and most-visited gardens in Ireland.

Altamont boasts many rarities, but it is its diversity which makes it unique. Man's - or, more usually woman's - hand has touched it only so much, for Corona North's passion for the red squirrels and the ravens which haunt the woods and the eels and others of the riverbank equalled her enthusiasm for plants of better recorded pedigree. Immediately beneath the 18th-century house are the formal gardens with their rosebeds and pergolas, a giant Wellingtonia surrounded by Portugal Laurel, planted to commemorate Waterloo, a peony walk, wisteria walk, tulip trees and handkerchief trees.

Rare azaleas, rhododendrons and magnolias surround the one-acre lake which was dug in order to create labour during the famine of 1845. Beyond, the stream and the garden plunge into an ice-age glen of sessile oaks and giant granite boulders. Here are rare clematis and hollies, Chilean fire-trees, ferns and bog-plants, but here too unofficial fungi,

wild daffodils and bluebells in season, and startling vistas of the river below. All this North nurtured through drought, storm and frost. She planted the last of her collection of rare oaks a week before her death.

She was born Corona Lecky-Watson in 1922 at the height of the civil war. The family's several houses were spared because they were known to be Quakers and good landlords, but two doctors deputed to attend at Corona's birth found their way blocked by trenches and trees

In the chaos, her parents forgot for months to name her. She was called after her father's favourite rhododendron



North's gardens at Altamont are among the most visited in Ireland. She left them to the Irish government

felled by rebel forces, and had to run cross-country. Gladstone bags in hand. A few weeks later, a band of masked, armed men stormed the house and searched it for arms. They demanded that they be given permission to search the nursery. Isobel stood at the threshold and invited them to shoot her sooner than enter the room and terrify the children.

Amidst the chaos, the naming of the new arrival somehow slipped the Lecky-Watson's minds. It was a nanny who pointed out the deficiency some months after the baby's birth, and Fielding Lecky-Watson glanced out of the window and selected the name of his favourite rhododendron.

As the daughter of a noted family of "thrusters" - the Watsons had been masters of the Carlow for a century and had hunted and killed the last Irish wolf at nearby Myshall in 1850 - Corona grew up in Molly

Keane land, hunting, fishing, dancing and making the annual pilgrimages to Badminton, Punchestown, Cheltenham and Galway. The Lecky-Watson's, however, had a less public passion. The family had been amongst the more discerning patrons of the inbred plant collectors of the 19th and 20th centuries, and many of the azaleas at Altamont are descended from these early gleanings.

Corona, like all her kind, scorned the "Anglo-Irish" appellation. She was Irish. On the other hand, Ireland was part of the British Isles and her links with England were strong. When the Second World War broke out, therefore, she "naturally" caught the ferry and enrolled as a Fani. She called often the pleasure of coming home on leave on a train which would run out of fuel and have to wait until the passengers had cut enough turves to build up a head of steam.

Returning to Ireland after the war, Corona gradually took over the running of the demesne. She was never able to make a good thing of the farm, but resisted all attempts to sell the land, in part because she loved her Channel Island herd and the gloriously mixed fowl which strutted about the gardens, in part because she loved their produce. She would drink cream by the half-pint, and the menu at her many lunches was high unchanging - pâté made with Altamont chickens and poeteen, served on Altamont soda-bread with Altamont butter, fresh Slaney salmon or, out of season, beef, and Altamont fruit, again with cream.

In 1965, when Altamont's great lake froze over, Corona held a party at which she was struck by the stylish skating of Colonel Gary North, late of the Buffs, a visitor at a neighbouring house. They married the fol-

lowing year and moved into the old steward's cottage above the river, which Corona extended ad lib with a characteristic blend of elegance, impulsiveness and impracticality.

It was on her mother's death, however, that Corona North's life's work began in earnest. To her husband's grumbles, she moved to the big house and then all but neglected it as she worked to clear beds and woodland, to plant and to prune. Dawn would find her feeding her fowl, working in the dairy, then putting in an hour or so in the garden before breakfast in the bow-windows overlooking her handiwork. Way into dusk, she could be found - or rather, in general could not be found - in baggy corduroy trousers, battling with bracken or briars in the glen. Gary would summon her with a hunting horn, explaining, "Woman's evaporated again."

This labour of love was rewarded by thousands of visitors and pupils at the garden holiday courses she initiated, and, at the last, by the Irish government's agreement to take over the gardens after her death and continue to manage them according to her principles: "We want to keep them intact for future generations to enjoy and to instil in them knowledge and a love of gardens, wildlife and nature, and the necessity to care for and protect their heritage."

Corona North's last words to her oldest friend, Rosemary Skrine, were, "Well, I've achieved what I wanted to achieve. It's safe now."

MARK DANIEL

Corona Deane Lecky-Watson, gardener: born Fenagh, Co Carlow 7 July 1922; married 1966 Gary North (died 1991); died Altamont, Co Carlow 7 February 1999.

David McComb

AUSTRALIAN ROCK acts exist in a cultural vacuum and have to earn their dues overseas before being accepted back home.

The Triffids, whose tall and charismatic front man was David McComb, followed in the footsteps of the Birthday Party and the Go-Betweens and relocated from Perth to London in the mid-Eighties. Their distinctive melodramatic songs earned the band a big cult following in Britain and the rest of Europe but, despite the critical acclaim given to albums like *Born Sandy Devotional*, *Colenture* and *The Black Swan*, mainstream success eluded them.

Born in 1962, McComb was the youngest of four sons in a medical family, his father a plastic surgeon of Protestant Northern Irish stock and his mother a geneticist with Huguenot ancestry. Religious, artistic and medical references, along with maritime metaphors, abound in his haunting songs and sea-shanties.

Growing up in the coastal town of Perth, in Western Australia, McComb eschewed the beach-bum culture, attended Christ Church Grammar School and proved a gifted student, winning prizes in Eng-



Front man of the Triffids

lish literature and divinity. While still at school, he formed his first band, Daisies, with Aisly MacDonald on drums. Daisies was a multimedia project, producing music, books and photographic work, and its output reflected McComb's early interests, in Bob Dylan, Leonard Cohen, the Velvet Underground and Patti Smith.

Going on to embrace disparate elements of popular music from country to electronic via the arty punk of

Television and Talking Heads, Daisies had, by 1978, evolved into the Triffids, and also comprised Martyn Casey on bass, Phil Kakulas, soon replaced by Jill Birt, on keyboards, and one of McComb's brothers, Robert, on violin, keyboards and guitar.

McComb went on to Curtin University, in Perth, to study journalism and literature. In 1980, the Triffids won a band demo competition and released their first single, "Stand Up", on the Shake Some Action label, the following year. By then McComb had decided to give music a real go. From their remote base, the Triffids moved to Melbourne before eventually settling in Sydney.

After a couple of singles and EPs, the group had saved up money from support slots with the Hoodoo Gurus, the Church and Hunter and Collectors, and in 1983 completed a debut album, *Treeless Plain*, for Hot Records, a Sydney independent. However, McComb later recalled:

In Australia, we were stuck between two worlds. We were trying to balance the harshness of Australian nature with a sense of romance. We were neither an art band nor a rock band like Cold Chisel or Midnight Oil. The Triffids had critical recognition and a thriving audience

- as much as an Australian independent band could cheerfully expect. But since we had already lauded ourselves 3,000 miles from our home town, we decided to head for the UK. This wasn't meticulously planned; it was just less trouble than getting US work visas.

The Triffids arrived in London in 1985 and with the addition of "Evil" Graham Lee on pedal steel guitar, recorded the *Born Sandy Devotional* album (1986) and *Wide Open Road* EP and played a series of "aggressive, cathartic shows. Even the ballads were confrontational," said McComb. The group were hailed by the British media, were featured on the John Peel show and supported Echo and the Bunnymen, and could now go back and take part in the "Australian Made" tour, headlined by INXS, in January 1987. "An Adelaide paper called the Triffids the most un-Australian and the most European band on the bill," said McComb.

Down under again, the Triffids had built an eight-track machine inside a shearing shed in the outback and cut the country-like album *In the Pines* (1986). On their return to the UK, they signed to Island Records. Armed with the considerable budget of £225,000, and the production skills

of Gil Norton, David McComb and his cohorts - including a new recruit, Adam Peters, on guitar - concocted the lush orchestrations of the poignant "Bury Me Deep In Love" and the melancholic wide-screen atmosphere of the subsequent *Colenture* album (1987). The title was a reference to "a fever or delirium when sailors have been away from land a long time and they start going loopy. They're convinced the rolling waves are green fields, so they jump overboard in a sort of homesickness gone badly wrong," explained McComb.

Despite the release of another two excellent tracks as singles ("Trick of the Light" and "Holy Water"), *Colenture* didn't have the impact expected of it. "We realised we had been touched by the blessed hand of *Spinal Tap* when we found ourselves to be curiously... big in Belgium, Holland, Greece and Scandinavia," said McComb. "It was obvious a beautiful era was at an end." In 1989, the "Goodbye Little Boy" single featured in the Australian soap opera *Neighbours* but, following *The Black Swan* (1989) and a live album recorded in Stockholm, the Triffids split up.

McComb subsequently worked with the Blackeyed Susans, recorded a single, "The Message", and covered "Don't Go Home with your Hard-On", for I'm Your Fan, a 1991 Leonard Cohen tribute album. In 1994, he issued a fine solo album, *Love of Will*, on Mushroom Records, who also issued *Australian Melodrama* (1994), a Triffids compilation album.

Backed by the Red Ponies, McComb toured Europe but was taken ill while travelling to New York later that year. A successful heart transplant in early 1995 enabled him to resume his studies, at Melbourne University, where he formed a new band, Costar, which played sporadically.

On 30 January, David McComb was injured in a car accident. He was released from hospital, but died suddenly at his home in Melbourne two days later.

PIERRE PERRONE

David McComb, singer, songwriter and guitarist: born Perth, Western Australia 17 February 1962; married 1986 Gail McComb; died Melbourne, Victoria 1 February 1999.

Brendan Devlin

HAD ALL the members of the medical profession, not just some surgeons, listened to and acted upon the principles of audit, quality assurance and evidence-based practice proposed by Brendan Devlin more than 15 years ago, many of our present difficulties and loss of public confidence would never have occurred. His approach to surgery was encapsulated some 35 years earlier by George Armitage of Leeds when he said "Surgery, like cricket, is only interesting if you keep the score."

Born in Lancashire in 1932 into an Irish medical family and having thus seen medical practice in England and Ireland before the creation of the National Health Service, Devlin became an ardent supporter of its ideals, wanted it to be of the highest quality and learnt much about how to achieve his aims through the political machinery of the newly created Health Service from his father. This background led him to read for and obtain a BA in Public Administration and Political Science, in Dublin, before reading for his medical degree, which he obtained with honours in 1957.

His surgical training followed the standard pattern of the day, five years as a Registrar, time off-service for research, followed by four years as a Senior Registrar, collecting an MD, an MCh, and Fellowships of the English and Irish Surgical Colleges on the way.

Such a training, moving from hospital to hospital at six-monthly or yearly intervals, leaves little time to think beyond the day-to-day problems of surgical practice but, whilst working with Sir Hugh Lockhart-Mummery at St Thomas', Devlin became increasingly disturbed by the distress suffered by many patients with ileostomies and colostomies (artificial openings of the bowel on the abdominal wall following removal of part or the whole of the colon) caused by poorly fitting rubber bags and adhesives that often caused a severe dermatitis around the stoma. He was concerned about the way in which these problems affected the patients' whole life and so went out of the hospital to see them in their homes, arranged for them to be visited by nurses and encouraged the development of better bags and adhesives.

This work, including a book, *Stoma Care Today* (1985), continued after his appointment to a Consultant post at North Tees General Hospital, and with the work of others helped the growth and development of the British Colostomy Society, of which he was elected Chairman in 1998.

This experience rekindled his concern for the surgical patient when not in hospital, the effect of hospitalisation and the paucity of our knowledge about the long-term physical and social effects of many surgical procedures. His response, which determined his whole career, was only to admit patients to hospital for as short a time as possible (or not at all) and to count all aspects of the cost of his clinical work - clinical audit.

As soon as he arrived in North Tees around 1970, he started performing day case surgery - 15 years before the Royal College of Surgeons' first publication on the topic. As hernia repair was one of the main operations performed as a day case, he naturally became especially interested in the methods of hernia repair and more importantly their

results. Although this interest produced many publications on hernias including a major textbook, *Management of Abdominal Hernias* (1988), and took him on lecture tours to many parts of the world, its most significant effect was to emphasise to him, yet again, the poor quality of evidence advanced to justify the multitude of medical opinions concerning not only the best form of hernia repair but many other surgical procedures. Anecdotes, case series, experience yes - but where was the hard, scientific acceptable evidence?

In the early Eighties, he began his most important work - a crusade to make all doctors, not just surgeons, audit and constantly review their work. After many lectures and discussion groups conducted all over the UK, he persuaded the members of the Association of Surgeons and the Association of Anaesthetists, with the support of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, to establish a National Confidential Enquiry into Perioperative Mortality (NCEPOD).

Its first report was published in

1988. It is now firmly established and is one of the national audits that is to be supported by the new National Institute for Clinical Effectiveness. As Director of CEPOD and later as Director of the Royal College of Surgeons Audit Unit - now the Department of Clinical Effectiveness - he championed the use of audit, guidelines, individual comparative audit, patient information brochures and quality assessment by patients. His biggest regret was that his profession has been so slow in adopting these methods of guaranteeing quality.

All this work was performed whilst conducting an active surgical practice and whilst being a member of the Council of the Royal College of Surgeons of England where as Chairman of the Examinations Board he led the revision of the nature and contents of the FRCS examination, making it, under its new title MRCS, an assessment of basic surgical training.

His CV describes the multitude of committees he chaired, books and articles written and lectures given but does not capture the zeal, en-



'Keeping the score'

thusiasm, sometimes frustration and anger, of an exceptional man, whose lifelong concern was the well-being of the whole of every patient, body and mind, whether they be in hospital at home, at work or at play, and his unswerving belief in "keeping the score", to which NCEPOD will be his lasting memorial.

NORMAN BROWSE

Hugh Brendan Devlin, surgeon: born 17 December 1932; married 1958 Ann Heatley (four sons); died 26 December 1998.

Lt-Col Jean Ballarin

IN 1941, Jean Ballarin led what is always regarded as the last charge of the French cavalry.

He was a professional soldier who joined the French army as soon as he was 18, in 1933. At the outbreak of the Second World War he was a corporal, stationed in Syria, with a regiment of Moroccan spahis. He heard the appeal of General de Gaulle broadcast from London on 18 June 1940 and like many other soldiers serving overseas he had to make a choice. He had lost faith in generals. But there was one general remaining. Like many others, including Moroccans, he left Syria and went via Egypt to the Sudan.

The French troops were put to guarding the Suez Canal from July to October, when the British command brought them into the area where an offensive was being planned against the Italians. Ballarin was with the Moroccan spahis who moved to Kassal on the frontier between the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan and Eritrea.

The terrain was extremely difficult, being largely mountainous, with primitive paths that were unsuitable for pack animals. The French unit had been given uniforms by the 5th Indian Division although they scrupulously kept their red kepis. Otherwise their equipment was lacking, particularly in automatic weapons. Therefore, given the terrain and this circumstance, they were particularly reliant on their horses.

Their orders were to reconnoitre the area of northern Eritrea and to engage with the Italian forces they encountered. On 2 January 1941 they were negotiating the plateau of Umbrega when they came unexpectedly on a force of Askari soldiers with Italian officers. Although the Italians were superior in numbers the French charged them, pursued them, and charged them again. The Italians took refuge in dense vegetation.

This was not a large-scale encounter. The French lost one spahi, the Italians had nine dead and abandoned four prisoners. The plateau which charged twice, and was led by Ballarin, numbered some 20 men.

For the rest of his life Ballarin appeared as a heroic figure: after the defeats of 1940 he had played a leading role in a French victory, and one which seemed in the finest of French military traditions. When the Eritrean campaign was over, Ballarin's unit was equipped with armoured vehicles and automatic weapons, suitable for the desert war.

Ballarin fought with Free French forces in Syria, and was afterwards stationed near Cairo. From there, under the command of General Koenig, he took part in the battle of El Alamein. As the Allied troops moved westward, Ballarin (by now a lieutenant) went with General Leclerc's army, in its attack on the German forces in Tunisia. Ballarin's plateau came under very heavy fire in the battle of Medenine, where he fought alongside the 2nd New Zealand Division and was under the command of General Freyberg. Afterwards, in March 1943, he passed to Leclerc's command. The fighting of the French in southern Tunisia earned a typical tribute from Montgomery. "Well done." On 2 June 1943 Ballarin was decorated and made a Companion of the Liberation.

A considerable change then came his way. De Gaulle had gone to Algiers on 30 May 1943. In August Ballarin was summoned to go there and to become head of de Gaulle's personal escort, with the rank of captain.

He did not accompany de Gaulle to France or to Paris in 1944, but returned to join Leclerc's army as it moved eastward towards Strasbourg and Germany. He was present at Hitler's last desperate attempts to keep Alsace in German hands. He stayed with Leclerc's celebrated 2DB as it was called (2ème Division Blindée), and went on to occupy Hitler's mountain home at Berchtesgaden.

After the war Ballarin remained with Koenig, who had admired his courage and now respected his facilities as an administrator. He was Koenig's chief aide in his commands of the French zone in occupied Germany, and of French forces in North Africa. In 1954 he experienced a hectic short period when Koenig became minister for defence in the government of Pierre Mendès France. This appointment, against the express wishes of de Gaulle, had to strengthen the French forces in Indo-China and find a compromise agreement for the creation of the European Defence Community.

With Koenig's resignation Ballarin returned to the army in his last appointment, promoted to the rank of lieutenant-colonel, he was given command of the 5th Regiment of Moroccan spahis. He retired from the army in 1962 and devoted himself to business interests in the 13th arrondissement of Paris. But he was always remembered as the soldier who led the last charge of the French cavalry.

DOUGLAS JOHNSON

Jean Ballarin, soldier: born La Villette, France 16 January 1915; married (four sons); died Paris 27 January 1999.

Marie

BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS

BIRTHS

Marie

It's
Jean
Ballan

Marius Schoon

MARIUS SCHOON's life was a powerful argument against the notion of racial stereotyping. Nelson Mandela has described him as "an enduring example of the fight for non-racism and democracy. He destroyed the myth that all Afrikaners were racists and oppressors. He therefore will be greatly missed, not only by his colleagues in the fight against apartheid, but by the entire South African nation."

White South Africans who challenged the apartheid government in the 1960s, at the risk of everything most precious to them, were very few. The number of white resistors whose first language was Afrikaans – the language of the regime that had institutionalised racism in every nook and cranny of social and personal life, the language of the police raid and the torture chamber – was minus-cule. Schoon was one of that tiny handful. He both loathed the ideology of racism and loved the richness of the Afrikaans language, especially its poetry.

After the massacre of unarmed demonstrators at Sharpeville in 1960, radical opponents of the government, along with Nelson Mandela in the leadership of the African National Congress, turned towards violent methods of resistance.

Schoon served 12 years in prison for a futile effort to blow up a radio transmitter at a police station in Hillbrow, Johannesburg in 1964, a fiasco compromised from the beginning by the police provocateur who had set it up. His two colleagues in this attempt were Mike Ngubeni, a black South African, and Raymond Thoms, a white English-speaking South African. Ngubeni was sent to join Mandela and other black male political prisoners on Robben Island, while Thoms and Schoon were sent to Pretoria Local Prison, where the white male political prisoners were kept. (Prison, like everything else in South Africa, was strictly segregated.) The strain of his long sentence broke Thoms's spirit, and on his release he killed himself. While Schoon was in prison, and following their divorce, his first wife, Diana, had also committed suicide.

On his release in 1976, he joined the African National Congress and the South African Communist Party in exile. For a period, while living with his second wife Jeannette in Botswana after his release from jail, he was a contact for the underground ANC military wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe.

He had met Jeannette, a former student and trade union activist, after his release from prison. Both were "banned" and prohibited from meeting each other, and they had in the customary way "skipped the border" and left South Africa illegally. It was while Schoon was working as a university teacher with the ANC in Lubango in southern Angola in 1984 that South African state assassins, under Major Craig Williamson, decided to kill him. Their chosen weapon was the parcel bomb. (The same technique, and the same assassin, killed the writer and political leader Ruth First in Mozambique in 1982. Williamson has also admitted responsibility for the bombing of ANC headquarters in London the same year.) Schoon was away from his flat in Lubango when the parcel bomb arrived. It killed Jeannette and their six-year-old daughter, Katryn. Their son Fritz, then aged three, was found wandering nearby. Schoon's life was left in ruins.

Schoon, said Nelson Mandela, 'destroyed the myth that all Afrikaners were racists and oppressors'

Schoon had made a radical break from the ideology of apartheid when young. His father was an intellectual advocate of the apartheid system, a head-teacher and both a zealous member of the National Party and a member of its secret guiding "brain", the Afrikaner Broederbond. Schoon himself studied at the academy of the Afrikaner elite, the University of Stellenbosch, before transferring to the more liberal and radical culture of the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. There he joined the non-racial Congress of Democrats, an organisation of white leftists allied to the ANC.

Not long before his release from prison in 1976, Schoon had the satisfaction of knowing that his father had publicly protested – at a National Party meeting – at Schoon's treatment in



Schoon spent 12 years from 1964 in prison in Pretoria

prison, and had resigned from the party to join the opposition Progressive Federal Party. Such strange things did happen in apartheid South Africa. Schoon came through his losses, a scarred and battered survivor, caring for his son, and moved eventually to the Republic of Ireland. There he met and married Sherry McLean. After the downfall of apartheid, they returned to South Africa in 1990, where Schoon worked in the Development Bank, overseeing projects to help rural black communities. His friend and fellow political prisoner Hugh Lewin has said that he would "hate to describe him as a banker. He was far too much of a poet." Schoon wrote both in Afrikaans and in English. Prior to the opening of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission last year, Schoon had begun a civil action against

Craig Williamson for damages. By a very narrow margin, the court decided to withhold judgement, pending Williamson's application for amnesty to the TRC, on the grounds that the killing of Jeannette and Katryn was political. Schoon angrily rejected a suggestion from Williamson's lawyers that they meet "and reconcile". Judgement is expected later this month.

PAUL TREWHELA

Marius Schoon, political activist, teacher and poet: born Johannesburg, South Africa 22 June 1937; married first Diana Openshaw (one daughter; marriage dissolved), second Jeannette Curtis (died 1984; one son, and one daughter deceased), third Sherry McLean; died Johannesburg 7 February 1999.

Gideon Rafael

GIDEON RAFAEL was one of the pioneers of Israeli diplomacy, and served as ambassador to London in the difficult years following the 1973 Yom Kippur War.

Alongside his early chiefs, Moshe Sharett and Abba Eban, Rafael set a standard of independence and flexibility in pursuing Israel's cause that was not always appreciated by a succession of hard-headed prime ministers. For the last 20 years of his life, he was a trenchant critic of governments moving too slowly, or too grudgingly, towards peace.

He was born in Berlin in 1913, the son of a prosperous furrier, and escaped to France in 1933, two months after Hitler came to power. He made his way to British-ruled Palestine a year later. Like many of his generation of German immigrants, he entered the Zionist public service through intelligence. His first mission, in 1939, was to smuggle illegal immigrants from Europe. In 1940, he conducted abortive negotiations with Adolf Eichmann to save 40,000 German Jews.

During the Second World War, in co-operation with British intelligence, he interrogated Jewish fugitives reaching Palestine via Turkey and Syria. It was feared that some might be German



'Not on this plane, gentlemen'

spies. He also collected evidence on Nazi war criminals that was handed over to Allied prosecutors in 1945. After the war, he catalogued stolen Jewish property in Germany and Austria.

In 1947, Rafael cut his diplomatic teeth lobbying the United Nations for a Jewish state. When Israel gained its independence in 1948, he helped Sharett to set up the Foreign Ministry in two rooms of the Labour Party's Tel Aviv

headquarters. Sharett assigned him to draft cables seeking diplomatic recognition. "Keep them short," he urged. "There's not much in the kitty."

Rafael plunged into the quest for an accommodation with the Arabs. He was the last head of the Israeli delegation to the 1949-50 Lausanne conference, when the United Nations brought Israeli, Egyptian, Syrian, Jordanian and Lebanese delegations to the same city, but never around the same table. The Israelis did meet, secretly and separately, in obscure village coffee houses with all but their Syrian counterparts. "The meetings," Rafael recalled, "were friendly, but they only emphasised the gap separating us." The story was the same in clandestine contacts he maintained, as head of the ministry's Middle East desk, from 1953 to 1957.

He once told me of a chance meeting with an Egyptian ambassador on a flight to New York. The Egyptian indicated that he wanted to talk and pointed towards the toilet. A sharp-eyed stewardess intercepted them. "Not on this plane, gentlemen," she said, and another chance went begging.

After serving as ambassador to Belgium and the European Community,

Rafael was appointed ambassador to the United Nations in 1967. The Six Day War tested his skill, ingenuity and stamina to the full in Israel's efforts, first to persuade the UN not to pull its peace force out of Sinai, then to head off a premature ceasefire when Israel was winning, and finally to discourage the Security Council from demanding an unconditional Israeli withdrawal. He lost one and won two.

Rafael returned to Jerusalem as Foreign Ministry director-general from 1968 to 1972 before a final posting as ambassador to London from 1973 to 1977. His autobiography, *Destination Peace – three decades of Israeli foreign policy*, was published by Weidenfeld & Nicolson in 1981. He continued writing and lecturing almost to the end and was a willing source for historians and documentary film-makers.

ERIC SILVER

Gideon Rafael, diplomat: born Berlin 5 March 1913; ambassador to the UN 1967-68; Director-General, Israeli Foreign Ministry 1968-72; ambassador to Britain 1973-77; married Nurit Weissberg (two sons, one daughter); died Jerusalem 10 February 1999.

The Samaritan on the road to Luton

THE CALENDAR of world religions is a crowded seaway. Festivals great and small sit nose to tail like cruisers plying a busy shipping lane. And it is premium time for sailings right now.

As one school of Buddhism prepares for Nirvana Day on Monday to mark the passing away from this world of the religion's founder, Gautama Buddha, Hindus are the same day getting set for Great Shiva Night, said to be the date on which Shiva the Destroyer performs the cosmic dance from creation to destruction. In addition this is the week in which Christians celebrate Ash Wednesday when the physical and spiritual discipline of Lent begins. But is there space for another festival in such a full programme? Perhaps. Just perhaps.

At least that's what came into my head this week during a chilly Monday morning rush hour on the largely unmythical streets of south London. That's when I figured I might just have witnessed the Descent of the Dove at the junction of Blackshaw Road and Maybury Street and thought the experience worth commemorating. Let me explain.

We had set off, my son and I, late for school. Not hugely late, to be fair, but late enough – it being on the first day of his exams – to raise the nervousness quotient from medium to high, given that 25 miles of unpredictable traffic along suburban roads and Home Counties freeway lay ahead. Given, too, that my trusted but tired Escort (showing signs of age) was on Monday, though, it played by the rules and we set off with reasonable hopes of making up time. Minutes into the journey our hopes were dashed as the eternal law of cause and effect – second-hand karma – kicked in and the offside rear tyre burst. John and I didn't hear the pop but soon became aware of the subsequent, deafening thunder of metal on metal which sounded like, well... Great Shiva Night.

Ignoring the heads (by now rotating in formation) of passers-by looking in appalled fascination at the source of the

strains which, in skilled hands, heightens, not lessens the effect. This was why classical erotic verse had a profound influence on much later times. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the Elizabethan age, where Spenser, Marlowe, Campion and Jonson rushed around, translating Ovid, Catullus and Horace with unmistakable glee.

Generally, we find that verse and prose produced by the 16th and 17th centuries is forthright on matters sexual. This is not to say that it lacks eloquence, but merely mirrors what was permitted by the conventions of the day. John Wilmot, Lord Rochester is a good example of the sexual freedom which came to symbolise the Restoration.

Smiling, she chides in a kind murmuring noise And from her body wipes the clammy joys, When with a thousand kisses wandering o'er My panting bosom, "Is there then no more?"

The 18th and 19th centuries tend to use metaphor as a veil and this, once again, respects the conventions of the time: for Sheridan, in his poem "The Ceratium", the plant is a suitably graphic – and red – representation of the male genitalia in all its glory. To today's reader this has its amusing side – either in admiration at the often ingenious way in which sex is disguised or in mockery at the prudery of the society which necessitated such measures.

But how to define the nature of erotic poetry? It is there in the very earliest literature – though it seems that the Sumerian and Egyptian saw sex as guilt-free but out of man's control as can be seen from this fragment of Egyptian poetry written over 30 centuries ago:

I found my lover on his bed, And my heart was sweet to excess I shall stroll with you in every favourite place.

And in our time poets as different as John Betjeman and e.e. cummings expressed their views:

may I feel said he I'll equal said she just once said he it's fun said she

It is not prudery that revolts at Interporn; but the brazen no-holds-barred nature of Interporn can only blunt the sensitivity required to appreciate true eroticism. Eroticism, the wisp of a veil, is a private joy while the bawdy frolic is a public pleasure. But Interporn is neither – and probably only too closely related to the reduction in the male sperm count – or the sad tales of sexual dysfunction in the latest American sexual report published, alas, in time for Valentine's Day.

Anthony Anderson has compiled the audiobook recordings 'Classic Love Poetry' and 'Naked She Lay – Classic Erotic Verse' (Naxos AudioBooks, each £8.99/£10.99)

GAZETTE

BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS

BIRTHS

OLIVER: On 11 February, to Roger and Ellen, a son, John Francis, a brother for Clare and Joseph.

HALES: On 2 February 1999, to Brenda Flaherty and Jonathan Hales, a fine son, Ben William.

Announcements for Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS (Births, Adoptions, Marriages, Deaths, Memorial services, Wedding anniversaries, In memoriam) are charged at £8.50 a line (VAT extra). OTHER Gazette announcements (notices, funerals, forthcoming marriages, Marriages, which must be submitted in writing, are charged at £10 a line, VAT extra.

BIRTHDAYS

TODAY: Mr Michael Attenborough, principal associate director, Royal Shakespeare Company, 49; Dr David Atterton, chairman, Guinness Mahon Holdings, 72; Miss Caroline Blackston, actress, 66; Mr Liam Brady, football manager, 43; Professor Derek Burke, former Vice-Chancellor, University of East Anglia, 69; Miss Jacqueline Clarke, actress, 57; Dr John Clayton, former Apothecary to HM Household, Windsor, 78; Miss Margaret Collins, former Matron-in-Chief, QARNNS, 72; Mr Gareth Davies, chairman and group chief executive, Glynwed International, 68; Miss Eileen Farrell, soprano, 79; Professor Janet Finch, Vice-Chancellor, Keele University, 53; Baroness Flather, councillor and local government worker, 65; Mr Peter Gabriel, musician, 49;

Mr Arpad Góncz, president of Hungary, 77; Mr John Healey MP, 39; Dr David Hessayon, horticultural writer, 71; Lord Lewis of Newham, Warden of Robinson College, Cambridge, 71; Mr John McAllion MP, 51; Miss Kina Novak, actress, 66; Lord Peyton of Yeovil, former government minister, 80; Lord Pym, former government minister, 77; Mr Oliver Reed, actor, 61; Miss Margaretta Scott, actress, 67; Mr George Segal, actor, 65; Dr Donald Sykes, former Principal, Mansfield College, Oxford, 68.

TOMORROW: Prince Hans Adam II of Liechtenstein, 54; The Right Rev Michael Ball, former Bishop of Truro, 67; The Right Rev Peter Ball, former Bishop of Gloucester, 67; Mr John Butterfill MP, 58; Professor Evelyn Edsworth, Vice-Chancellor, Durham University, 66; Sir Arnold Elton,

consultant surgeon, 79; Sir Jack Hibbert, former director, Central Statistical Office, 67; Mr Kevin Keegan, football manager, 46; Mr Christopher Lilli, actor and musician, 50; Mr John MacGregor MP, 62; Miss Manuela Maleeva, tennis player, 32; Miss Lois Maxwell, actress, 72; Lord Newby, 46; Mr Alan Parker, chairman, British Film Institute, 55; Mr Michael Rudman, theatre director and producer, 60; Dr Sir Albert Sloman, former Vice-Chancellor, Essex University, 78; Sir Nicol Stenhouse, former President, Bengal Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 88; Sir Jocelyn Stevens, Chairman, English Heritage, 67; Mr Alexander Stewart-Moore, former chairman, Gallaher, 84; Lord Wilson of Tillyorn, chairman, Scottish Hydro-Electric, 64; Mrs Margaret Wright, former Chief Commissioner, the Guide Association, 57.

ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS

Princess Alexandra tomorrow attends a Gala Performance at the Wimbledon Theatre, London SW19, to celebrate the theatre's re-opening.

CHANGING OF THE GUARD

TODAY: The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am. TOMORROW: The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 10am, 1st Battalion The Duke of Wellington's Regiment mounts the Queen's Guard, at Buckingham Palace, 11.30am, band provided by the Scots Guards.

LECTURES

TODAY: Victoria and Albert Museum: Divia Patel, "Henri Cartier-Bresson in India and Asia", 2pm. National Portrait Gallery: Anne Harvey, "Record of a Woman: Felicia Dorothea Hemans (1753-1835)", 1.10pm.

The sound of silents

Glossy new prints of classic silent movies have provided Carl Davis with the opportunity to compose sumptuous new scores for them. His latest work is for Ernst Lubitsch's *Old Heidelberg* – and tonight he conducts it live for the first time. By Judith Palmer

I don't know if Edward VIII got out to the cinema much, but I suspect some princely adviser or other should have tried a little harder to point him in the direction of Ernst Lubitsch's 1927 silent classic, *Old Heidelberg*. Set in a storied German principality at the turn of the century, this dark romance explores the impossible love between a crown prince and a barmaid. Essential viewing for would-be kings and consorts everywhere, this poignant tale of passion and obligation gets a fresh airing at the Royal Festival Hall on Saturday – the first time in over 70 years.

Old Heidelberg is the latest silent to get the Photoplay treatment – burnished up in a spanking new print to the live accompaniment of the London Philharmonic Orchestra as Carl Davis conducts the UK premiere of his luscious new score in an all-encompassing rush of strings and smouldering cellulosid charisma.

It's nearly 20 years since Kevin Brownlow and the late David Gill teamed up with Carl Davis to restore Abel Gance's split-screen epic, *Napoleon*. Since then they've created a pioneering repertoire of over 30 films: tracking down lost scenes, and editing back missing sequences, correcting film speeds, and commissioning potent new scores, to reinvigorate the most stunning movies of the silent era – from Garbo in *Flesh and the Devil*, to Valentino's *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*.

Old Heidelberg may not be in quite the same tempestuous super-league, but Lubitsch (who later went on to direct Garbo in *Ninotchka*) transforms an off-the-peg love story into a far subtler dilemma, suggesting you can never go back and recapture the past. Under the "Lubitsch touch", the normally over-mannered Norma Shearer achieves a twinkly spontaneity, weaving through the beer-gardens with an air of brimming stein-lagers, while the Latin matinee idol, "Ravishing" Ramon Novarro, creates a haunting figure of trapped isolation in servitude to the State in a film of outstandingly sophisticated, fluid cinematography. As Billy Wilder noted, Ernst Lubitsch "could do more with a closed door than most of today's directors can do with an open fly".

Based on Romberg's Broadway-smash operetta, *The Student Prince*, Lubitsch's version was banned from using either the original title or the original music. "It's a fabulous score," says Carl Davis, "so I thought I'd call the estate and see if they'd agree to let us use it in our revival." The Rombergians, however, were no happier



Carl Davis: 'We're emphatic that we're not a museum – we try to bring films to life'

Kalpesh Lathigra

about the idea the second time around. "I started looking carefully at the film and found the titles were pervaded with musical references to other fabulous German songs – folk songs, drinking songs, university songs and duelling songs – so I decided that was the way in," he explains.

European film-makers such as Eisenstein issued their films with specific scores, but Hollywood was a lot more free and easy

with its musical accompaniments, usually allowing cinema orchestra leaders to rifle through volumes of mood music to pick suitable matches to a sheet of cues. Carl Davis composes his sumptuous scores with the same spirit of free-ranging gusto. "We're quite emphatic that we're not a museum – we try to bring the films to life," he says. "For *Old Heidelberg*, you should feel you're in the lighter movements of a

Mahler symphony. It's late German Romantic music – lush and gorgeous."

Davis, who composed the music for the BBC's *Pride and Prejudice*, and is currently scoring Mike Leigh's new Gilbert & Sullivan biopic, is untroubled by critics waving the word "pastiche". "It's the name of the game," he says. "It's like working with theatre or ballet, you'll always incorporate a broader world of music into

your vocabulary. I was thinking recently about Tchaikovsky – in *Swan Lake* he had to write a Polonaise, a mazurka, a waltz, a Hungarian dance, a Spanish dance, all to the strict requirements of a choreographer. Of course, you can still be yourself writing an Arab dance, or music for a low dance-hall scene. If you felt it was a strain, you simply wouldn't do it. My view is that the music is there to push the whole thing

forward and make the film more effective. Personally, I think it's quite a lot of fun."

Old Heidelberg, tonight, 7.30pm, RFH, South Bank, London SE1. Carl Davis gives a free pre-concert talk, *The Magical Sound of Silents* at 6.15pm (0171-960 4242). A season celebrating the centenary of Ramon Novarro continues at the NFT until 25 February (0171-928 3332)

Great minds think alike (unfortunately)

DID RICHARD Dawkins, that hard-boiled, free-ranging, egg-headed Darwinian, resident in the City of Dreaming Spires, where he is known to some students as the Professor of Public Misunderstanding, ever pose naked for Auguste Rodin in a church such as this one? I asked myself this as I stared around the Central Hall, home to British Methodism.

It was an august occasion. Dawkins was down on a quick away-day to engage in spirited debate with Steven Pinker about whether or not science was killing the soul. Thousands – a couple at least – were in attendance. Gages had been exchanged. And then, all of a sudden, the whole thing fell flat as a punctured balloon. It was at that point that I began to speculate upon

who Rodin's model for *Le Penseur*, and whether Dawkins, though seemingly youngish, could have been the chap; whether he had the muscles, the gravity, the embonpoint, the staying power for such a commission as that one? Whether, being a man of some eminence himself, he could have borne the tempestuous, bullying habits of Auguste Rodin...

Round and round it went in my mind, to the exclusion of almost all else, this small-scale, maddening obsession, like some crazed midge.

But why this, and not the subject of the debate itself? Because the affably bumbling and bespectacled science journalist who had introduced the two men to the audience, and the two men to each other, and the two men

DEBATE

RICHARD DAWKINS AND
STEVEN PINKER
CENTRAL HALL
WESTMINSTER

to the audience again, had mentioned, almost as if it were a matter of marginal importance – marginal importance indeed! – that, fundamentally, the idea of a debate between these two men was something of an absurdity because, by and large, they agreed with each other. They both knew that there was no such thing as a soul, and no such person as a God. They both knew that science was killing, or had already killed, that absurd idea – if by that word "soul" was meant some immaterial

entity, and not the pleasingly acceptable notion of soulfulness. They even felt perfectly comfortable to be voicing these brazen thoughts within reach of John Wesley's stern, admonitory finger, which, cast in marble, lay in wait for them beyond the door.

And so, that was it then: in spite of the fact that they were both mature, dyed-in-the-wool Darwinians, they had nothing to fight about. It was not a debate, but a kind of long exchange of congratulations for having thought so long and so hard in the service of genetics (Dawkins) and cognitive psychology (Pinker), with a bit of mutual back-scratching here and there.

For this reason, somewhat distracted and momentarily disappointed, I began to wonder whether

Dawkins, who when he sits or stands posed at the lectern, strikes such remarkably intellectual poses – finger on cheek; profoundly searching gazes into the middle distance; body curled forward with fist on chin, etc, etc; everything so beautifully posed and practised to create an overall impression that here is Pure Mind on the move – had, soul or no soul, been here before, and that Rodin had perhaps snapped him up after one quick, imperious glance down the Metro car.

Away Dawkins had been led, by two or three burly studio assistants, frog-marched to the Rue Varenne, and then stripped down to the birthday suit.

The gravely was never in doubt – but did he measure up?

MICHAEL GLOVER

Hard habit to break

OPERA

DIALOGUES OF THE
CARMELITES
SPITALFIELDS MARKET
LONDON

POULENC'S LAST operas could hardly be more different: *Les dialogues des Carmelites*, a grand opera about nuns, their spiritual sublimity threatened by a very French revolution; *La voix humaine*, a tiny monologue in which a woman tortures herself by repeatedly phoning her lover, who wants to cut the connection forever.

Political and religious torment in one, private crisis in the other; and women the fulcrum of both. Poulenc identified completely with his female protagonist, "Blanche," he said of the novice at the centre of *Dialogues*, "was me, and is still me." Far from being the care-free charmer of musical legend, Poulenc, at least here, plumbed considerable personal depths.

You might think *La voix humaine* the more likely project for student performance, but Trinity College is nothing if not ambitious and, in Poulenc's centenary year, its staging of *Dialogues* (sung in English) showed its musical strength in depth: a large orchestra and a cast of dozens gave their all, and if the drama was intermittent, some of the fault may be the opera's. Where Poulenc saw saintliness in the nuns'

sacrifices, we might see only misguided waste, yet as the score lines the nuns up at the guillotine, only to deprive them one by one of their heads, it is impossible to remain unmoved. At this moment, Kresimir Dolencic's plain production finds its target.

Poulenc makes heavy demands of his singers, in simply keeping going. The vocal style, taking a lead from Debussy, is an inch away from conversational recitative, with vocal display at a minimum. The singers get through vast amounts of text, so communication is at a premium. These are voices with time to grow, and not everyone got their text across in Spitalfields' rather unyielding acoustic, but there were several successes.

There's not much room for men in *Dialogues*, but Benjamin Lake makes the marquis a burly, insensitive brute, just the kind of father to drive Blanche to the nunnery. When

there, she finds Edel O'Brien's remarkable Prioresse, refusing to go gently into God's arms in a death scene of hair-raising intensity: a pity the libretto kills her off so early. Poulenc, though, wanted attention to focus on Blanche and here, in Ksenia Eremina Jones, he has a singer to watch closely. Her diction is clear, she acts well, and the voice is bright, even and expressive: ingredients, with a bit of luck thrown in, on which to build a solid career.

The performances benefited from the precisely sculpted conducting of Andrea Quinn, who also ensured that the orchestra got the measure of Poulenc's ebullient, flowing dramatic pulse. Over the past four years, Trinity's performances at Spitalfields have added considerably to London's operatic life. A shame, then, that for yet more "retail development", the Market Opera building will shortly be demolished. As the rich get richer, culture gets poorer: a familiar story.

NICK KIMBERLEY

Further performance of *Dialogues*, Spitalfields Market Opera, 4-5 Lamb Street, E1, 7.30pm, Saturday 13 February, (0171-377 1362)

ARTS DIARY

DAVID LISTER

NOW HERE'S a phrase to strike fear into the most hardened aesthete: the opera hypermarket. This disturbing vision of arias in bulk on a greenfield site comes from David Pountney, former head of productions at English National Opera. Pountney is giving the Royal Philharmonic Society lecture on the future of opera tonight, and in a discussion I had with him for tomorrow's Radio 3 programme, *Music Matters*, he said he looked forward to the opera hypermarket complete with cinemas and other entertainments, well away from city centres.

Pountney's radicalism doesn't stop there. He added that he could think of nothing worse than three-hour opera relays on television. "It's the most dreadful TV," he says. But isn't it government policy to show more of these as a way of increasing access? "Yes," he agreed, "but that's just the sort of ignorant thing they would say. They should keep out of things they don't understand." You could warm to this man.

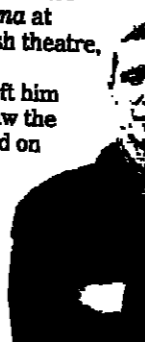
ANOTHER MAN to warm to is actor Paul McGann (below). He says he won't appear in any more theatre productions because of anxieties about performing in front of a live audience. He actually received rather good reviews for his performance in Snoo Wilson's *Sabina* at London's Bush theatre, but says the experience left him scarred: "I saw the audience piled on top of each other. They were clearly suffering."

This must be a theatre history. An

actor has actually said he is giving up stage work because he can no longer bear to see the audience in uncomfortable seats. Good thing McGann hasn't worked the Traverse in Edinburgh where, like the Bush, you find out pretty quickly whether the person behind you has washed their socks recently. It's a dangerous precedent. If all actors showed such empathy with their audiences, theatres would close more quickly than under the Puritans.

MY ARTSPEAK award for the week goes to Oscar-nominated John Madden, director of *Shakespeare in Love*. It was good to see him at a press conference on Tuesday trouncing rumours that Gwyneth Paltrow was "aloof" on set. But when trouncing, it's best not to begin with the words: "Everyone has a way of working." It sounds suspiciously like artspeak for "aloof".

JOHN MADDEN did have a good answer, though, when asked how he would celebrate if he won the best-picture Oscar. "I'll take Spielberg out to dinner," he replied. That will make a memorably short acceptance speech, should he win. We're now in full acceptance-speech season, that time of year when we realise that the world's best actors can't muster a funny line between them. They should take note of an story told by Julie Christie at the Evening Standard Film Awards last Sunday. When a French director was accepting a short-film prize, he said: "Short film; short speech; thank you."



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THE WEEK IN REVIEW

BY FIONA STURGES



OVERVIEW	CRITICAL VIEW	OUR VIEW	ON VIEW
THE FILM YOUR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS Following his debut in <i>The Company of Men</i> , director Neil LaBute offers a brutal antidote to Valentine's Day with his account of sexual depravity and fractured relationships.	"LaBute is so much in love with the idea of people's selfish, despicable ways that he has overreached his means of attack; he has all the poison, but no darts," reported Anthony Quinn. "Heartless, hollow and only sporadically funny," wrote <i>Time Out</i> , adding "it's hard to commend a film that's so insistently, even arrogantly, in love with the idea of hating humanity." <i>The Daily Mail</i> deemed it a "nasty satire on nasty people", but the <i>Daily Telegraph</i> were impressed: "The film has the concentration of a stage play... LaBute's dialogue has vitriolic force, and his actors deliver it well." "A state-of-the-art bulletin on the sex war," cried the <i>Financial Times</i> .	LaBute's loathing of humanity extends to women as he reveals them to be as heartless between the sheets as men. But their turpitude may be too much for even the most hardened viewers.	<i>Your Friends and Neighbors</i> is out on general release, certificate 18.
THE PLAY THE TEMPEST In the final phase of the West Yorkshire Playhouse's season with a resident company, Jude Kelly directs Sir Ian McKellen as Prospero in a production of Shakespeare's <i>The Tempest</i> .	"The production exerts a potent, if studiously uncharming, spell," wrote Paul Taylor, commending McKellen's "exquisitely calibrated, low-key performance." "A brooding vision shimmering with dangerous magic," said <i>The Stage</i> , adding that it was "an absorbing <i>Tempest</i> , a <i>Tempest</i> charged with excellence." "A strong start, but nothing that follows quite matches it," complained the <i>Financial Times</i> , while <i>The Times</i> was not convinced: "The production strikes me as irredeemably second-rate, and though McKellen's performance is sometimes weirdly mesmerising, it isn't the illuminating Prospero one had hoped for." "Not wholly satisfactory," concluded the <i>Daily Mail</i> .	McKellen skilfully conveys Prospero's struggle between rage and culpability in this stylised version of Shakespeare's play, though the magical, isle as a correctional institution may aggravate purists.	<i>The Tempest</i> is at the West Yorkshire Playhouse until 27 February. For bookings and enquiries call 0113-213 7700.
THE ALBUM BLONDIE 16 years after their split and after a fluctuating solo career, Deborah Harry reforms Blondie, marking their return with a new album <i>No Exit</i> and a No 1 hit <i>Maria</i> .	"A powerful comeback... as much due to Jimmy Destri's ear for a surefire pop classic as it is to Debbie's bewitching revitalisation," exclaimed Andy Gill, adding: "Even at a time when No 1 hits are as forgettable as ants, 'Maria' already sounds like you've known it for ever." "If the band sometimes wallow in nostalgia, theirs is a heritage worth re-exploring," pronounced the <i>Daily Mail</i> . "This merits cautious rejoicing... a pop goddess is still a pop goddess, after all," remarked <i>The Guardian</i> , while <i>The Times</i> observed: "a firm artistic rationale for the group's return to active duty." "No Exit may break your heart with its so-so, that'll-do, OK-ness, magic doesn't do it," murmured <i>Uncut</i> .	After an embarrassing series of comebacks from Eighties icons, expectations were decidedly low. But Harry's band have created a contemporary sound that still bears all the hallmarks of classic Blondie.	Blondie's <i>No Exit</i> will be available in record shops from Monday.
THE BOOK CHARLES BUKOWSKI Biographer Howard Sounes tells the story of cult writer Charles Bukowski's colourful life, from early childhood in Los Angeles to his death in 1994 from leukemia.	"This biography is a thorough introduction that will not be rivalled for quite some time. Its effect is to revitalise rather than reduce Bukowski's work," decided Guy Mannes-Abbott. "The author does not neglect the solvent, humorous, sometimes sober, figure who eked out a living working as a mail-sorter rather than turn to crime," noted <i>The Times</i> , while <i>The Guardian</i> were impressed: "This biography can claim to be the most definitive to date." "Bukowski's America is particularly well explored, with Sounes careful to dispel all lazy comparisons with Hunter S Thompson," wrote <i>The Observer</i> . "Powerfully researched" muttered the <i>Times Literary Supplement</i> .	Sounes refrains from indulging in the well-documented peculiarities of Bukowski's psyche, instead offering a straightforward account of the writer's life from birth to death.	<i>Charles Bukowski: Locked in the Arms of a Crazy Life</i> by Howard Sounes (Rebel Inc) is available in bookshops.
THE TV PROGRAMME VICIOUS CIRCLE Kieran Prendiville's BBC drama, starring Ken Stott, follows the nefarious exploits of Martin Cahill, the Dublin gangster known simply as "The General".	"Once or twice the film trod too heavily - at one point, we saw Cahill poleaxed by the beauty of a Goya portrait. But, by and large, Kieran Prendiville's script showed a commendable reluctance to draw morals... cool, intelligent, entertaining, and very welcome." "Stott made a convincingly unpleasant Cahill, a cruel, clever, but dangerously vain man," revealed <i>The Times</i> , while <i>The Mirror</i> considered it "a cops-and-robbers thriller with witty one-liners thrown in for light relief." "If it hadn't been based on real-life events it would have been totally unbelievable," cried <i>The Sun</i> . "As a thriller, <i>Vicious Circle</i> failed in its first duty - to thrill," grumbled the <i>Daily Mail</i> .	Though occasionally lacking in subtlety, Prendiville's script avoided moralising, while Stott's crook was so likeable that the plot could be seen as unbelievable, were it not true.	The BBC has no plans to repeat <i>Vicious Circle</i> at present.

EXIT POLL

VISUAL ARTS
MONEY IN THE
20TH CENTURY
ROYAL ACADEMY
LONDON

DAN CLANCY
18, student,
High Wycombe
"The early work
was new to me,
and I enjoyed the
large paintings
impressively
placed in a large
room. They
illustrated Monet's style, especially
the detail that can look blurred
from a distance or on the smaller
paintings."



RACHEL
SENNETT
16, student,
Macclesfield
"I especially
noticed how there
are many more
colours than you
can see on a poster. It was a good
opportunity to get a grip on how
his work developed. We are here
on a school trip, but because it
was busy, it was hard for us to
make proper notes on the
paintings. But it was very exciting."



INGEBORG
CUTTS
69, retired, London
"It was interesting
to see the
paintings when
Monet couldn't
see properly -
suddenly the
colours are
incredibly vivid, the brush strokes
more emphatic. I think he adapted
remarkably well. As a whole, the
exhibition doesn't show a new
Monet: it is how I have always
imagined the waterlilies, his
garden. But I was overwhelmed by
his work as an old man."



DL SUTHERLAND
56, teacher, London
"Being an illiterate,
I found the head
set lecture very
informative. It
is excellent to see
all the paintings in
one place. But you
need time to look
at them, and I found it far too busy.
And the busy atmosphere was too
much of a contrast to the paintings
that are soothing and reflective. It
would have been lovely if a little
more quiet."



Fish, flesh and good red herring

WHEN YOU consider the phenomenon of *fin de siècle* brooding, you tend to think of the hock-and-seltzer-drinking classes, of Wilde, Beardsley and interestingly soiled bedlinen in the Savoy. You don't automatically think of angry Cornish fishermen. Nick Darke's new play *The Riot* puts an exuberant bomb under such metropolitan parochialism. The piece is set in Newlyn in 1896, and everyone is terribly conscious of being on the brink of a new century.

"We got the nineteen undreds comin up," declares Thomas Bolitho, merchant, magistrate, mine-owner and mayor. "Do you want the nineteen undreds to pass ya by and dock in Plymouth?" His question is a classic case of the voice of self-interest disguised in the accents of paternalist solicitude.

The Riot dramatises a real-life dispute. The mackerel fishermen of Newlyn, all god-fearing Methodists, objected to the way their east-coast rivals were being paid to work on the Sabbath and to land fish, with the result that the prices were lowered for the rest of the week. The agro (which included the tipping of 100,000 mackerel into the harbour) escalated and turned into a deadly battle between rival towns. The army had to be called in.

In Mike Shepherd's vibrant production, the piece is performed by Cornwall's crack Kneehigh Company whose brand of physicalised, bracingly irreverent ensemble work was last seen in London when they brought Darke's *King of Prussia* to the Donmar Warehouse's 1996 "Four Corners" season. Now this highly skilled outfit, which specialises in site-specific performances on cliff-tops and in quarries, has linked up with the National to push home the point that, Miro remarked, "To be truly universal, you must be truly local".

A dark-edged agit-prop romp which replays these grim events as buoyant bloody farce, *The Riot* is very much to my taste. So it feels a bit ungrateful to confess that I kept wishing that, instead of importing the show into the Cottesloe, the National had organised a fleet of buses to take London punters down to see it outside *in situ* in Penzance.

Still, this is very much the next best thing. With Brechtian Methodist hymns at the harmonium infiltrated by tribal drumming and assegaai rattling, it's a play in which the events in Cornwall are shadowed by parallel unrest in colonial Africa, to which many local miners were forced to emigrate because of pit closures. Not that there's any shortage of knockabout culture-clash on the home front. Darke shows how, when the female stonebreakers were put out of work, they sought employment as domestics in the homes of the very toffs who had dispossessed them. And pipe-smoking profanity was not the first thing the nobs were looking for in a maid.

With an elderly mother played as a bombarded drag act, mock-deaths staged with the aid of tomato chutney and an eleven-hour reprieve for capitalism as it stands with a noose round its neck on the gallows, *The Riot* could certainly be said to subscribe to the cock-up theory of history. I think it would be a lovely gesture if the National were to invite The Lord's Day Observance Society to a special Sunday performance.

PAUL TAYLOR
Booking to 10 April (0171-452 3000)



The Riot: a dark-edged agit-prop romp

Geraint Lewis

The world's greatest jumble sale

ONE MIGHT hope that Manhattan would be untouched by this winter's anti-urban and somewhat depressing new trend, shopping online. But lately New York's fashion class has started looking online at the Web auction house eBay for what they call "Eames-era" drinking glasses, thrift-store paintings and barely worn Tocco dresses. "It is fashionable in New York circles," says Judith Newman, a New York-based writer who recently documented her obeisance to eBay in *The New York Times*.

One can bid on the hundreds of thousands of objects on the site, and the highest bidder wins. The company claims that there have been 155 million bids on over 40 million items in just over three years. "My friends are mostly New York writers and they shop on eBays," says Nancy Kalish, a Brooklyn writer, who spends two hours a week on it. "We talk about bidding strategy, debating whether or not it's better to come in strong early in a bid."

Upper East Sider Diane MacFarlane hangs around eBay's Jewelry Chatroom, and Jerry Spiegler, a New York New Media attorney who collects mid-century Italian and German art pottery, logs on constantly to search for additional pieces of work. He's bought nearly 300 items in the last year and a half. But what does it mean, now that Newman and the rest are exhibiting their collectivities at this on-line jumble sale? What of New York's real streets teeming with antique stores and markets? After all, in what was once Manhattan's Little Italy and is now Nolita, you can find the same astral 60's lamps, had amateur paint-

ings that have been given upmarket status because of their resemblance to contemporary painters, and vintage couches re-upholstered in the "Prada fabric" that you can find on eBay only in nicer condition. But it's the very ubiquity of upscale kitsch in Manhattan, with all the stores that specialise in a certain make of 50's blonde furniture and know the appeal of the Grove Press paperbacks and 60's East Village literary magazines, that's inspiring many New Yorkers to enter America's virtual shopping world.

Ebay's Beanie Baby enthusiasts, doll-house doyenns, and more marginal collectors, like the dominatrix who bought a Minnie Mouse purse on eBay for her slave, seem rusticated in comparison. I must confess that I hope to encounter North Carolinians and Nebraskans selling their ancient board games and Mason jars cheaply and unironically, and I stare at the photos of green plastic lamps in someone's house in Virginia with a co-optive zeal. Kalish says that her best deal was buying a Mission-style mirror "from a woman in Kentucky for half the price it would have cost from an antique store." Spiegler, meanwhile, wound up buying some post-war pottery on eBay for \$40 from a naive seller before making a tidy profit by reselling it in the virtual auction house for \$200. It took a New York freelance journalist named Todd Levin to bring irony to eBay recently. Levin attended an award ceremony for the Cool Website of the Year, and collected eBay's prize for "coolest shopping site." Though he had no relation to the company, Levin then sold eBay's award - on eBay itself.

One man and his mike

IT'S WHAT you might call the "I'd like to have a drink with that bloke" factor. It doesn't matter what some rare comedians talk about on stage, people just want to bathe in their presence. So however much nonsense Eddie Izzard spouts about skinning elephants or secret-agent socks, audiences will lap it up. It's a case of "Never mind the material, feel the warmth".

The young, yarn-spinning comedian Adam Bloom is scarce in the Izzard class - who is? - but there is a similarity in that people do seem to relish being in the same room as him. Admittedly, Bloom's one-man-and-his-mike approach is seen in some circles as hopelessly old-fashioned, and his choice of subject matter is never going to set the world alight. During his show at the Gaslight Club in Peterborough last Sunday night, he managed to fit in two of the world's most done-to-death stand-up topics, McDonald's and bottoms, within a few minutes. Later, I found myself thinking, "Not another comedian riffing about a tiff with his girlfriend."

For all that, his inclusive, ungimmicky style reminded us that you don't have to dress up as, say, a security guard or a Page 3 girl in order to win an audience over. Infectious enthusiasm will do it every time. Commanding a room is, of course, much harder than it looks, but Bloom got off to a flying start at Peterborough with that old stand-up standby, insulting the neighbouring town. "I was in Wisbech last night," he told us. "They hate you lot. They had

JAMES RAMPTON
Adam Bloom is on nationwide tour until March

THE WEEK IN RADIO



MAGNUS MILLS

WHEN A young tutor fancies his pupil, and she him, and there's no one else around, then they can sometimes end up in compromising positions. Especially if he's been given the additional task of administering "discipline" as and when required. Such was the pleasurable existence of Abelard and Heloise until her uncle caught them at it. And 12th-century France being what it was, they paid dearly for their sins.

She ended up in a nunnery, he was castrated, and they spent the rest of their years apologising to each other by letter. *Abelard and Heloise* (Radio 4, Wednesday) portrayed the doomed lovers in later years, separated by monastic walls and competing to save their souls with confessions. Anton Lesser had the perfect voice for Abelard: the tremulous whining of someone who'd been forcibly prevented from committing further sins, but who suspected he may be sent to Hell all the same. Meanwhile, Lynsey Baxter was suitably contrite as Heloise, wailing desperately that she was "the wretchedest woman in Christendom". Yes, well if the two of them had had a little more self-control they wouldn't have got into trouble in the first place.

Keeping men and women separate was just one of the functions of workhouses in 19th-century Britain. When Honor Dickerson was caught throwing bread to her husband over the wall that divided them, she was sentenced to six hours in a punishment cell. *Life in the Workhouse* (Radio 4, Monday) told this and other stories of social deprivation, sometimes from the mouths of people who'd actually been born there. One old girl had done 41 years in the laundry, resulting in severe arthritis, but none the less sounded alarmingly jolly. "All the others have died, poor things," she said. "Ooh, we had some fun."

Another voice came from the side of authority. An elderly matron remembered going round the dormitories issuing a sweet here and a bun there. "We must have been very unpopular," she acknowledged. Not as unpopular as the unmarried mother of two who was determined to live in the married quarters. For some reason the married women didn't want her among them, but she won the day by wedding a one-legged man. After that, they had no choice but to accept her. The one-legged man, however, lived somewhere else.

The Marquis of Worcester, the Duke of Argyll, the Earl of Craven and the Lord Palmerston may sound like a list of pubs, but they were actually the customers of Harriette Wilson (1786-1855). The greatest of all London courtesans once said "no" to the Prince of Wales, but most of the time she said "yes". Her career was recounted in *The True Memoirs of Harriette Wilson* (Radio 4, Monday). Played maturely by Julia St John, Miss Wilson confessed that the depravity of her heart was the main driving force behind her exertions. At one point it sounded as if penetrative sex was being had on the wireless, but it can't have been because it was only 10 to three in the afternoon. When she lost her looks, Harriette Wilson was induced to tell all to a drooping public, and her famous clients were invited to be left out of her memoirs, for a suitable fee. "Publish and be damned!" replied the Duke of Wellington. She did, and most probably was.

THE BOOKS INTERVIEW

Fangs for the memory

Jeremy Seal travelled to confront his worst fear – but snakes still terrify him. By E Jane Dickson

Jeremy Seal is not the kind to travel hopefully. Indeed, for a travel writer, he shows a marked mistrust of the open road: "Tearing around a country and picking up on whatever strikes you as interesting smacks of desperation to me. The classic travel-writing model is driven by having to move on all the time, the implication being that otherwise you run out of things to say, and I'm very suspicious of that. If you stay in one place and dig deeper, there is always more to write about."

Seal's first book, *A Fex of the Heart*, performed a kind of archaeology on the soul of modern Turkey, meticulously exposing layer after layer of cultural and political sediment. Bottomless curiosity, lightly worn scholarship and a ready stock of jokes drew comparisons between Bruce Chatwin and Seal as luminaries of New Travel Writing.

His second book, *The Snakebite Survivors' Club* (Picador, £16.99), strays even farther from the classic travelogue in so much as it is less about a physical journey than an emotional odyssey. The subtitle, "travels among serpents", suggests the cane-swishing derring-do of 19th-century explorers, a tradition the writer comprehensively subverts. Seal, you see, is scared of snakes.

"I've always had this thing about snakes; they exercise a particular kind of horror, that sense of being simultaneously fascinated and repulsed. And I'm particularly scared of them when I'm in snakey places."

Four snakey places – Africa, India, Australia and the rattlesnake belt of the American South – provide the settings for Seal's herpetological explorations, but the places are not the point. "The snakes are more important than the destinations I go to," acknowledges Seal. "I chose a multiplicity of settings because I wanted to show the universality of the hold snakes have on our imagination. Nobody is neutral about snakes; wherever you go in the world they have this mythological aura and they are used in so many different ways to define different attitudes to life."

The snakebite survivors Seal homes in on amply prove his point. There is the Alabama sect which handles rattlesnakes as a test of their fundamentalist Christian faith; then there are the white settlers in Kenya, pitching their colonial *sang-froid* against a culture in which snakes are "sent" by witch doctors to avenge evil; white Australians, who take the relatively uncomplicated view that snakes are pesky buggers to be knocked on the head; and the snake cults of Southern India, for which serpents are both death-dealers and divinities.

"I had to be selective," says Seal. "Mexico has a fascinating snake culture and so has the Far East, but I felt I had to keep to areas where English is widely spoken. To try and get to the bottom of how people feel about snakes in a language I don't properly understand would have been foolhardy."

There is no question of where Seal's sympathies lie. "When I first started researching this book, I wrote to a lot of people in the herpetological community for advice and a fair number of them wrote back and said, 'I'm really worried about what you're doing here, because I think you're going to demonise these beautiful creatures', and I thought, 'Well, you're absolutely right. They are demons.'"

"I can see how much more enlightened and subtle and holistic the Indian attitude



JEREMY SEAL, A BIOGRAPHY

Jeremy Seal, 37, grew up in Devon and Somerset, the son of a naval officer. He taught English as a Foreign Language in Turkey before working as a publicist and editorial assistant for Chatto & Windus. After 1989, when the

company's enthusiasts for books were replaced by "American marketing men", he says that he "knew it was time to get out". He is now a full-time writer. His first book, *A Fex of the Heart* (about Turkey), was published in 1995

and shortlisted for the Thomas Cook Award. *The Snakebite Survivors' Club* is his second title and he also writes travel articles for national newspapers. Jeremy Seal lives in Gloucestershire with his wife and daughter.

is. I love the way the cobra is redeemed in that country, but emotionally I just don't buy it. I was shocked on the other hand, at how readily I accepted the whole serpent-as-Satan idea in Alabama. When it comes to snakes, I'm with the nutters."

The Alabama chapters of the book are accordingly charged with a particular power. Seal imaginatively recreates the sensational trial in 1996 of a snake-handling

zealot who tried to murder his wife by forcing her hand into a box of angry rattlesnakes. Seal's ear for dialogue and empathetic descriptions bring him bang up to the frontiers of fiction.

"I find myself pulled more and more in that direction," he says. "Every strand of my snake research revealed stories that were just crying out to be put in a novel. It was hard at times, to keep my focus."

"Focus" and "motive" are the watchwords of the New Travel Writing. *A Fex of the Heart* was a kind of forensic quest to find the last bona-fide fex-wearer in Turkey, and 300 years of Turkish history were illuminated as Seal charted the rise and fall of the brimless hat. (Brim = secularism in a country where you touch your forehead to the ground to pray.)

The snake, however is a less discrete

metaphor, and marshalling a thousand and one references and resonances into a compelling yarn without once resorting to footnotes requires a particular, graceful talent. Fear is the driving engine, and Seal's appalled fascination never falters.

In the course of the book, we are exposed again and again to the particular horrors of the world's most venomous snakes like some kind of literary aversion therapy. We gradually acquire an uneasy expertise with the habits and temperaments of the taipan, mamba, rattlesnake and cobra. But the awful mystery of these snakes remains intact.

"Before I set out, I went on a phobia management course at London Zoo", Seal recalls, "where a herpetologist comes and tells you that your fear is irrational and silly and then you all get hypnotised and trot round to the reptile house to make friends with the snakes. I stopped short of being hypnotised, because I had a strong feeling that if I lost my fear it would take away the motive for the whole book."

The preoccupation with "motive", he argues, is a modern necessity for travel writers. "People have started talking about 'quest travel writing' in the last few years, and it's a kind of pejorative title," says Seal. "It's as if the classic idea of travel writing is the venerable one and we are lazy young upstarts trying to cheat and find short-cuts. The old heroic mode of exploring foreign parts was about making a country your own, probably even giving parts of it your name. All travel writers had to do was turn up and keep a journal and they knew that people would be interested in what they said simply because it was new and exotic."

Apart from the best pair of snake boots money could buy (an accoutrement that provoked much ridicule in countries where everyone wears flip-flops) and an ash-wood talisman (hermetic against snakes), Seal travelled with the minimum of professional paraphernalia. Even a notebook, he feels, gets in the way of the story. "I don't take notes," he explains. "I just remember all the best bits and then dredge them up months later when I sit down to write. I think it helps to let your material salt down for a while. Patrick Leigh-Fermor didn't write about his journeys until years after the event and that is some of the freshest travel writing I have ever read."

Seal refuses to become sentimental about the fact that some of the world's most impressive snakes are now top attractions on the tourist trail. The snake parks of Kenya, where his African chapters are set, are entirely geared to the local tourist economy. "Even today there is a style of travel writer who is loath to admit that mass tourism has happened, who wants to give the impression they are somewhere no one has ever been, and I find that vaguely dishonest. The entire point of modern travel writing is that the world is travelled."

Seal's theory will be tested by his next expedition, a mere two-hour jaunt down the line from Bath, where he lives with his wife and 15-month-old daughter, to the Cornish coast where he is researching an imaginative history of shipwrecks and their impact on the local psyche. The thought of having to machete his way through throngs of trippers to get to his subject does not depress him. Beyond the ice cream-and-chip line lies Seal's *terra nova*. "Just because people are there," he insists, "doesn't mean that it's discovered."

COVER STORIES



PUBLISHERS WILL not want to be too up-front about it, but the coming months will see a steady repackaging of the Iris Murdoch oeuvre. Handily for Random House (which includes her hardback publishers, Chatto), her paperback rights have all but reverted from Penguin; Vintage will publish her in soft covers. Meanwhile, Peter Conrad, an academic and long-standing friend, is at work on an authorised biography, which was bought by HarperCollins last autumn. Dame Judi Dench has been named as the actress who will play Murdoch in the screen version of John Bayley's touching memoir, *Iris*.

IT'S QUITE a relief to know that Sir Edward Heath, whose memoirs took such a long time to write, has been rewarded for his efforts (aside, that is, from the £350,000-odd Hodder added to his bank account). At the Channel 4/House Magazine Political Awards, the old curmudgeon beat off competition from, among others, Hugo Young and Douglas Hurd to win a glass statuette for Political Book of the Year – at least according to the customers at Politico's Westminster bookshop. Presenting the baubles, lanky newscaster Jon Snow confessed that he had first thought the book was called *The Curse of My Life*. The audience laughed but Heath remained impassive, appalled at yet another reference to the woman whom he refuses to call anything other than plain Mrs Thatcher.

P.J.'S, THE trendy Covent Garden American-style restaurant, seemed an inappropriate setting for the launch of a book by one of Britain's greatest eccentrics, Dr Patrick Moore. His subject this time is Mars, which led one to speculate on the xylophonist's musical offerings: Bowie's "Life on Mars" (or more Moore's era) "Fly Me to the Moon"? Moore opted for his own compositions, released shortly on a CD from the Scottish National Orchestra. "It's coming out on my birthday," he told me excitedly, as his monocle dropped into his wineglass.

THE YEAR-END accounts of O'Mara Books make interesting reading. To March last year, sales grew from £2.9m to £3.17m; profit to £1.2m against a previous loss of £376,084. The reason? A Paris car crash which "freed" Andrew Morton to recast his Diana biography in her own words. O'Mara is pessimistic about the future of royal publishing; all his hopes are now pinned to Morton's collaboration with Ms Lewinsky. Will they wax lyrical about their shared love of TS Eliot?

THE LITERATOR

Please be my Virtual Valentine...

... but what happens when the passionate cybersex turns sour? Peter Jukes joins the community of online swingers who composed a dark romance in the digital domain

THE INTERNET is pure sex. Forget its notoriety for pornography; something much more interactive is happening. Probably the most prolific parts of the Web are its chat networks, in which strangers exchange small talk and then engage in more intimate contact: cybersex and online assignations.

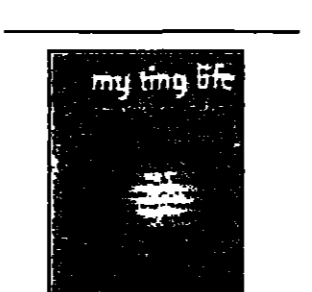
The erotic potential of the Internet probably exceeds its commercial potential. Now used by women almost as much as men, it offers a dark space of disguises and metamorphoses, where meaningful glances are raised, where couples court and couple. The Tom Hanks/Meg Ryan movie *You've Got Mail* celebrates this journey from retail to romance. And Julian Dibbell's book shows how cyberspace became a clearing-house for desire.

Ostensibly a history of a pioneering online community, *My Tiny Life* is Dibbell's novelised account of his own passionate obsession with virtual worlds, and its real-life repercussions with his partner. Her rival was LambdaMOO, a tiny virtual universe, carved out of text and computer code on a server in Palo Alto. Once opened to the Internet, hundreds of strangers started pouring in through its portals. It is hard to describe this tiny text-based universe in linear

prose. By typing in commands you can move through descriptions of objects, rooms, streets – anything that can be constructed in words. Sometimes, these are animated in programmed subroutines, so that asking for a cappuccino can launch a mini prose-poem about its taste and effect. As you enter the author's own Garden of Forking Paths, a programme uses the *I Ching* to determine each direction. Most importantly, you can encounter other personas, such as exu, Niacin or Horton Who: characters who seem equally at home discussing Baudrillard as they are with computer code.

Though a species of journalism, this account of a factitious universe begins to feel like a picaresque novel by Rabelais, rewritten by Pynchon and Tolkien. Unlike a novel, however, this fiction is a collective edifice, built by hundreds of individuals in a city of words.

Sex is a vital ingredient. The book opens with an account of a celebrated case of virtual rape, when the persona of "Doctor Bungle" used a voodoo doll to force other citizens to violate themselves in several graphic ways. His "crime" took place just after the historic decision of the Wizards (lead programmers) to drop their priestly powers. Instead of an

My Tiny Life
by Julian Dibbell

Fourth Estate, £16.99, 336pp

élite laying down the law, the community had to decide democratically if Bungle had committed a crime that merited being "loaded", having his identity erased, the virtual equivalent of capital punishment.

This opening essay has all the hallmarks of becoming a classic for anyone interested in this new terrain of virtual exploitation. Starting from Foucault's assertion that sex is as much an exchange of signs as of bodily fluids, Dibbell proceeds to demolish the concept of "free speech" as a defence of pornography or libel. In this empire of signs, words are indistinguishable from actions.

The rest of the book examines other elements of "tiny

life". Dibbell explores Tiny-Geography and has a foray into TinyGender with the adoption of a female persona, Samantha. As for TinySex, Dibbell holds back on his own long cybersex session with "S" until well towards the end.

One of the problems of turning a parallel and interactive world into a linear book is that the feeling of total immersion is lost. On line, you don't know where the next line is coming from: it emerges, letter by letter, with the hot press of speech. In cold text, the idiosyncrasies of the characters can seem false, and Dibbell's languorous style does not quite prevent some of their concerns seeming overwrought.

But he has a trick up his sleeve. While the VR world is described like a realistic novel, he renders RL (real life) in the same format as an online game. The staccato result is unexpectedly compelling, particularly when he describes his own inability to "commit" to his partner, Jessica, and she counters his virtual infidelities with real ones of her own. The quality of the writing is so potent at times, it makes you long for a proper novel by Dibbell.

My Tiny Life contains many thoughtful connections between virtual reality and its prototypes in maps or games. A

beautiful passage compares the fictional quality of the digital domain with the equally fictional notion of borders. Birds or grasses might not recognise these arbitrary squiggles on the map, but human culture does, and it goes on to reshape reality along its own lines.

Which brings us back to sex – perhaps the most contested borderline between biology and culture. Dibbell shows how they are hard to separate. His remote infidelity only serves to make him more aware of the preciousness of his partner. He chooses atoms over bytes, RL over VR, but the distinction is not always so simple to make.

William Gibson wrote the first novels about cyberspace over a decade ago; Dibbell's non-fiction book is the first novel by cyberspace. It certainly won't be the last. What new genres this electrification of the word will engender is, thanks to Dibbell, clearer to see: they will be recapitulations of old genres.

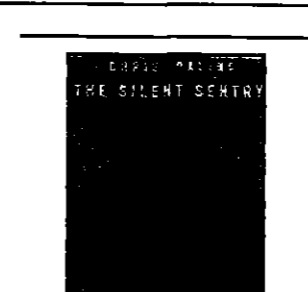
My Tiny Life places cybersex in a continuum of erotic symbolism, going back through the epistolary novel at least as far as *La Roman de la Rose*. It shows how virtual desire is another variant of the convention of courtly love, with passion clinging to, but also trying to supersede, the insufficiency of words and images.

Signal failures for the paranoid producers

Nicholas Royle tunes in to trouble on the studio floor

CHRIS PALING is the literary authority on male breakdown and midlife crisis. He demonstrated this in his third novel, *Morning All Day*, a big step up from the flawed but enjoyable *Deserters*, which itself had the hard task of following the acclaimed *After the Rain*. Now, in *The Silent Sentry*, he picks through the wreckage of Maurice Reid's disastrous life, showing all the compassion we have come to expect but with added wit and a well-judged sense of comic timing. If there are fewer laughs, Paling's sense of humour does remain intact, making sure the effect of the concatenation of disaster is not merely to numb.

A radio producer at the Corporation, Maurice is keeping his head down while the winds of change whistle round the corridors of power. For a man who discovered his wife and another woman coated in flour while "performing cunnilingus complicatedly on each other" on the kitchen floor and who finds himself homeless when his girlfriend kicks him out of her flat, he's notably chipper. He may be a victim, but he's a survivor, too. Keeping him sane – just – is his contact with his young son, whom he sees all too rarely. The changes at the Corporation are a constant, vague threat; of more immediate concern are

The Silent Sentry
by Chris Paling

Jonathan Cape, £9.99, 248pp

the machinations of colleagues. Why is fellow producer Warde suddenly behaving so oddly? What might his editor, "Peculiar" Edwards, be planning? Which way will Elaine, alternately motherly and predatory, swing? Whom should Maurice trust with the rumours about presenter Roy May and a girl in a hotel room? Not Val, who pinched Maurice's wife and earns her crust in the tabloids.

The squallid specifics of toilet-bowl realism – the filthy flat where Maurice rents a room, the tart he picks up in a pub, the bloody broken nose – are thrown into sharper relief by such beautiful ideas as Edwards' planned "White Synphony", an hour of radio

silence, and lovely images such as the smoke of a woman's cigarette trailing "over her shoulder like a steam train".

The novel is also richly textured with visual details of the audible medium: the blue balze and blue plugs, big German tape decks, a "long, sleek flight desk with thirty faders". The level of verisimilitude is maintained when it comes to the producers themselves. Radio virgins entering a studio to be interviewed for the first time will be a little less naive if they have read Paling's novel.

The author, of course, works in BBC Radio, although the jacket blurb coyly fails to record the fact. It's an irony that will not be lost on him that any possible radio feature on his novel, which will no doubt be closely read by BBC producers, is unlikely to reach the airwaves. And if it does, and the powers that be catch *RA's Front Row* in the lino on the way home and hear what life is like down on the studio floor, who knows how much longer Paling will be working for the BBC?

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The men who sold the world

Where have all the spies gone? Into corporations, every one.
Christopher Hope is stirred, but not shaken, by the outcome

ONCE UPON a time, back in the Cold War when politicians ruled the world, they had a powerful claim on our attentions. They had the means to kill us all. And their secret agents – the “lonely decisioners” as John Le Carré calls them in a telling phrase in his new novel – played a deadly game. The stakes were high: peace, or mutually assured destruction. Even so, there was a settled quality to things: “we” were here and the “Sovs” were there. In between the parties moved the secret go-betweens in their melancholy grandeur. In the Cold War, spies were hot: they made news, they made war, they made great fiction.

Then the world changed. The Berlin Wall fell, the Sovs collapsed and things were never the same. Anyway, the record suggests that real spies were pretty dull at the real thing. When the Wall came down, the secret watchers were as astonished as the rest of us.

On Russia, their record is even worse. They missed what was staring them in the face. Any interested visitor, walking about in Moscow in the late 1980s, or sitting in Russian kitchens listening to the frantic talk of anguished Muscovites, felt that the show was over. Though the agency denies it now, the CIA billions never found that out, never walked in the streets, apparently never simply looked and listened.

It was Le Carré, about that time, who suggested with brilliant perversity that maybe the Russians didn't have what it took. In *The Russia House*, a book almost as savage as *Single & Single*, he put forward the notion that perhaps “the Sovs” were not really a nation of rocket scientists, all superbly tooled up and raring to run the planet.

That thought did sometimes occur to travellers holed up in the Ukraina Hotel, trying to fix an electric plug. But it was a detestable heresy in intelligence circles, where egos were as bloated as the budgets on which they thrived. In any case, the point about the Russians was that we needed them. Those people were some sort of solution.

Then the Empire flew apart. So who runs the world now? Or put it this way: who is as venal, merciless, crooked as the power-brokers on both sides? *Single & Single* points us to the financial buccanniers, the bankers, brokers, the boys in bright braces dealing in complex financial

instruments. Where have all the spies gone? Into corporations, every one. After the Cold War, cold-hearted commerce is king. When the hedge funds wilt, babies starve. When currency speculators move in, nations go to the wall.

Enter Tiger Single, creator and master-spirit of the venture-capital house of *Single & Single*. Tiger is jaunty, charismatic, arrogant, crooked, instantly recognisable and utterly of our time; the essence of the corporate raider, the gallant asset-stripper. Tiger's urge is great and simple: to convert the new Russia to the new capitalism. And the financial press – Le Carré has the fawning tone exactly – excitedly parrots his mission, his canting sermons on progress. “The Greatest Challenge to the Commercial World today... is the birth of a market-oriented Soviet Union.” Therefore the House of Single will be the “facilitator”. It offers “solid long-term partnership with-out exploitation”.

What it means is that Tiger Single plans to do for the old Soviet Union what George Soros did for world currencies. Or Nike for factory prices. Or Swiss banks for Jewish gold. If you thought the old days were bad, welcome to heaven as declared by the hedge funds, the universe run by money men, the men who put the “con” in economics. If the old political bosses happily offered to trade their mothers in the interests of “world peace”, take a look at the new lot. Tiger Single would not simply offer; Tiger Single would deliver.

Le Carré parades for our delectation as convincing a line-up of prominent shits as ever read a balance sheet or restructured an economy. The novel opens when a corporate lawyer has his head blown off in a

grisly comic execution on a Turkish hillside. From there on it is all go: the action shifts between London, Russia, Dorset and the wilds of Georgia.

There is the Georgian Mafia, and former Russian spies turned entrepreneurs. There is all Le Carré's deeply satisfying detail. There is Tiger's son, Oliver, raised to run his dad's show when the old man steps down – and suddenly having doubts about Tiger's tender desire to save Russia for capitalism. When young Oliver beats the odious Swiss lawyer, Herr Stampff, we cheer him on.

Tiger Single is a wonderful creation. He is not merely an insufferable bastard; he is rather likeable in his arrogance. Shaved by Trumper, shod by Lobb, phoney from start to finish. He is also, God help us, a missionary, out to convert the heathen – into profit. He is ready to trade in everything from human souls to good, clean Caucasian blood, from the vein of exhausted, bankrupt Russians. Le Carré has always drawn and felt his Russians superbly well: *Single & Single* does beautifully the madness, the greatness, the vodka, the dark heart.

There is Brock, the patient spy-master of *The Russia House*, now older and wiser. But times have changed and it shows. Brock has all the instincts of the Cold War controller of agents in the field. But his new role as a kind of super-sleuth on the track of off-shore accounts and financial scams seems to fit him as uncomfortably as the customs uniform he so seldom wears.

Single & Single, one comes to realise, is a kind of revenge comedy. This is the new world order and Le Carré kicks it around very satisfactorily. But there is a limit to how excited you can get about offshore holdings.

Money-laundering and money grubbing are dull. We may be appalled by Tiger Single and his innovative ways of making a killing, but we are hardly surprised. When W H Auden remarked, of the brokers, that they spent their time roaring like beasts on the floor of the bourse, that was no more than we expected.

The trouble now, so Le Carré suggests, is that men like Tiger Single have leaped right out of the trading floor and into the pulpit, preaching the New World Economic Order. Nowadays, runs the gloomy thought that underpins this wonderfully



Commerce is king in Russia now that the Cold War is over

Paul Massey

angry novel, when the world's business elite meet in covens like Davos at the annual World Economic Forum (here lightly disguised as “an informal German lakeside seminar for senile untouchables”) Tiger Single will be there, driving the big courtesy Audi around in the snow.

What the folks who brought you the New World Economic Order failed to mention is that they are it. And anything that goes

– goes. Behind them are the dealers in derivatives, the hedge fund managers, the private bankers. Complex financial instruments are used to club the enemy into submission. This is war: Tiger Single is what we have coming to us. Be frightened, runs Le Carré's underlying message in *Single & Single*.

It may be true. But, somehow, the news that balance-sheets have taken over from

the balance of power is not enthralling. I was more frightened, before. The finger on the nuclear button wins every time against the hand in the till. Mutually Assured Destruction beats Money Laundering any day. Bring back the Sovs, I say.

Christopher Hope's new novel, *Signs of the Heart*, will be published by Macmillan in June

How Plato started the fatwa business

ALL WEEK, the tributes have rolled in for a writer who drew on creeds of every kind in her bold investigations of belief and unbelief. And tomorrow marks a full decade since another novelist, who tried to pull much the same trick, suffered a state-sponsored threat of execution. Iris Murdoch's obituaries have taken it as read that a career spent composing tall stories on the margins of other people's cherished faith – or lack of it – merits respect. Dame Iris herself did no such thing. Indeed, her books gleefully depict figures who (give or take a few twists of history) could not only support the fatwa against Salman Rushdie, but cheerfully carry it out.

Murdoch argued so hard for the fearless art of fiction because, as a philosopher, she knew that most of the world's leading doctrines detested it. She grasped the force behind the ancient critique of imitative art as an irresponsible game with truths that lie too deep for tales. Forget the wrangles over “blasphemy”, and that

A WEEK IN BOOKS



BOYD TONKIN
Dame Iris can account for Rushdie's plight

critique drives Rushdie's more rational antagonists. Murdoch makes a superb advocate for a fiction free of priestly – or political – interdict only because she can voice the other case so well. The best commentary on the core assumptions that fuel the Rushdie “debate” (if debates can happen with a gun at one side's head) can be found in her great exposition of “why Plato banished the artists”, *The Fire and the Sun*. This account of Plato's notorious urge to censor and control all art is reprinted in *Existentialists and*

Mystics, the rich board of Murdoch essays that Peter Conradi edited in 1997.

Artists, thought Plato, make mischief with religion: they “portray the gods as undignified and immoral”. Art “apes the spiritual”, and subtly “trivialises” faith. It teaches a “spiteful amused acceptance of evil”, and hures us into preferring shadows over substance. That metaphysical loathing for storytellers or actors has shifted very little over the past 2,500 years.

Now, Platonism suffused aspects of Islam almost as much as it did Christianity. Akbar Ahmed's new survey of Islam, *Today* (O B Tauris, £9.95) points out that some Muslim scholars call Plato a secondary “prophet”, who spread God's word. So a punitive fury at irreverent fictions grows not from alien superstition, but from the dark heart of “western” culture. Murdoch saw, and explained, all this with a bracing wit and clarity. Which is why we can mourn a truly illuminating thinker, as well as a spellbinding teller of tales.

A satirical wizard from Oz

Lachlan Mackinnon wishes a fine poet a happy 70th birthday – and curses his publisher

POETRY, PETER Porter has written, “is paid to distract us, / to tell the man disappointed by his mother / that he too can be a huge cry-baby”. Porter's own mother died when he was nine, and her ghost stalks much of his earlier work. However, these lines appeared in *The Cost of Seriousness* (1978), in which Porter confronted the suicide of his first wife. Even the hostile Craig Raine admitted it had moments of “great poetry”, and I am not the first reviewer to draw attention to the lines:

*I once a death to you – one day
The time will come for me to pay
When your slim shape from
photographs
Stands at my door and gently
asks*

*If I have any work to do
Or will I come to bed with you.*
Repetition does not tire this memory; Porter's ability to reach for it through grief and anger was an achievement needing only the simplest words to be made memorable.

Simplicity, however, has rarely been Porter's strong point. Since he arrived from Australia on 19 February 1961, three days after his 22nd birthday, Porter has made himself an

uncomfortable part of the English cultural furniture. As a poetry reviewer with a rather narrow taste, a critic of opera and music and book-reviewer, he has dissented from much fashionable rubbish, but as a poet he has never quite been assimilated. His early work was predominantly satirical, vexed by the insouciance of the inheriting classes. I remember reading his derisive line about the young returning from London to their ancestral homes, “the bongos fading on the road to Haslemere”, in a public-school study near Godalming, the air thick with rock and feeling Porter didn't understand his adopted country; 25 years later, I fear he was right.

Porter's accuracy came out of a remarkable autodidacticism. Having no university education, he set out to master European art with the hunger of an earlier passionate tourist, TS Eliot. Unlike Eliot, he was as engaged by the minor as by the major, which makes the frame of reference of his poems unusually wide. One often wonders whether the most apparently passionate utterance should be attributed not to the



Collected Poems
by Peter Porter
Oxford University Press, 2 volumes,
£25, 404 & 384pp

author but to a character: say, a minor 18th-century composer. Anyone who calls this elitist misses the point: Porter has trudged the galleries, heard the records and done the reading. If we don't, so much the worse for us.

That Porter and his characters are hard to tell apart is a consequence of his lack of dramatic imagination. To compensate for this, he uses allegory, and often we find abstractions taking on unusual vitality. In “The Golden Age of Criticism”, Porter finds that “among the factories of Arcadia some are working at packing time into its crates of

knowledge”. Porter's distaste for the academic is voiced with equable humour, as in his vision of critics singing

*hymns to old humanity, the gods
that rise in rivers, shepherds
calling to their flocks across a
sculptured quadrangle.*

I only find one poem in these nearly 800 pages in which Porter lets his evident lyrical bent loose, “Waiting for Rain in Devon”. In *Spirit in Exile: Peter Porter and his poetry* (1991), Bruce Bennett tells us that this refers to the drought of 1976, which the poem does not say. This brief piece ends:

*Something has emerged from
dreams
to show us where we are going,
a journey to a desolate star.
Come back, perennial rain,
stand your soft sculptures in
our gardens*

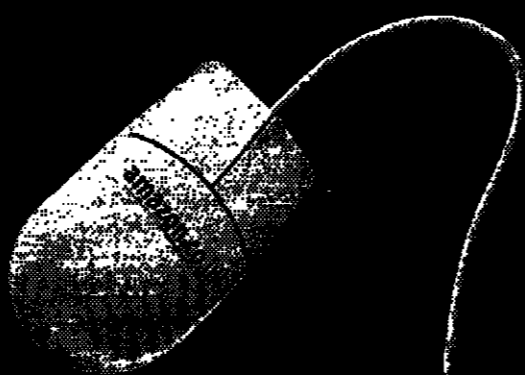
for the barefoot frogs to leap.
The omnipresence of death is a frequent topic: “soft sculptures” must make us think of Claes Oldenburg. The allusion is easy, though, and rapidly gathered into the sensory immediacy of “barefoot”. If one were to attack Porter's work, it would be by saying that all too often his moral and cultural re-

sponsibility has exacted “The Cost of Seriousness” and that here, for once, it does not.

I do not make such an attack. Rather, I want to praise the intelligence, variety, humanity and sheer interest by which most of these poems live. Their occasional limitations reflect the pressures of the age as much as the author's imperfections. Equally, the misprints which litter the second volume are, I suspect, his publisher's fault as much as his.

This ample boxed set will be the last significant publication of poetry by OUP which has decided to abandon contemporary verse. Buy it now, as the Press is unlikely to reprint it. If you would rather read about Porter than read him, you can wait, as Oxford is keeping Bennett's critical biography in print. Oxford is, it seems, happy to make money out of this major writer's work so long as it doesn't actually publish it. Academic parasitism rarely walked so naked. Porter's attack on English culture is vindicated by the contempt “this publisher of nearly 40 years” (as OUP puts it) has shown for the art he has served so well – and, indeed, for him.

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INSPIRATIONS
WRITER BILL BRYSON

The music
I almost never listen to music. I'm about the least musical person I have ever encountered. I like silence, even on a long car journey. But if I'm doing a big spring-clean I might put on a Jimi Hendrix album and listen to a couple of tracks very loud. I particularly like the song Red House.



want to stay 365 days a year, it's not that stimulating, but I'd certainly like to spend a couple of hundred days a year there.

The film

The Wizard of Oz directed by Victor Fleming. I think it's underrated in all kinds of ways. Technologically it was wonderful, the story inspired and it was perfectly plugged into a childlike mentality. It's the only children's movie that I've seen that's genuinely scary for children. Every time I see it it takes me right back to my own childhood and leaves me with a residual disappointment in a lot of movies because if they could realise imaginary places so well half a century ago, why can't they do a better job now?

The place

Home. Hanover, New Hampshire is quintessentially American. It's where my real bed is, where my wife and kids are. I've been away a huge amount this year. It's not where I'd

The artwork

The work of a good friend of mine, David Cook. He does all kinds of stuff (including my book jackets). I admire his way of seeing the world. He draws a tea towel hanging on a washing line, a rumpled bed or a cup and saucer in exquisite detail.

The play

Christmas pantomimes. Sometimes Britain does something so completely unexpected and off-the-wall and pantomime is the perfect example of that. I love the way they drop in jokes that go over the kids' heads but which the adults enjoy. We always come back to Britain at Christmas and go to the panto.

Bill Bryson's *Notes from a Big Country* is published by Doubleday, £16.99

PAPERBACKS

BY EMMA HAGESTADT AND CHRISTOPHER HIRST

On Giant's Shoulders
by Melvyn Bragg
Sceptre, £7.99, 366pp

IT'S HARD to see how this volume, based on a Radio 4 series, could be improved on as an introduction to science. A dozen scientific greats, from Archimedes to Einstein, are dazzlingly illuminated by successors working in the same fields. We learn that it was Galileo who first insisted on the power of maths ("without it, one is wandering about in a dark labyrinth") and the key thing about the "deeply unlikable" Newton was his realisation that both the falling apple and the captive moon obey the same law. Sparks fly between contributors on Darwin. This is science told with passion.

The Lover's Companion
edited by Elizabeth Jane Howard
Pan, £7.99, 262pp

WORTH READING as much for Elizabeth Jane Howard's elegant editorial asides on love and literature as for the anthologised passion in store. Howard has plumped for love at its most thrilling - extracts from *Wuthering Heights*, *First Love* and *Anna Karenina* - and period pieces from Nancy Mitford, Elizabeth Taylor *et al*. Defending the joys of "vicious pleasure", Howard attacks that "nasty highbrow theory" that romance is for losers. A sucker for the Tudors, she includes the full lyrics of "Greensleeves" and Henry VIII's letters to Anne Boleyn.

Three Miles Down
by James Hamilton-Paterson
Vintage, £7.99, 296pp

AFTER HIS paeon to the oceans *Seven-Tenths*, the aquatically-obsessed Hamilton-Paterson was invited to accompany an attempt to recover \$83 million in gold from two ships on the Atlantic sea-bed. Though he applies his novelistic skills to the characters aboard the Russian ship hired for the expedition, H-P admits, "Science is so much more interesting than literature it's really quite shocking." The highlight of the book is when he wangles a trip to the depths: "Wonderful beyond anything I've ever seen before, spectacularly ungodly." No gold was found, but H-P brought back a book of great riches.

SPOKEN WORD

CHRISTINA HARDYMENT

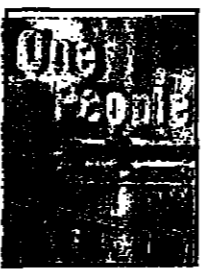
Naked She Lay: an anthology of classic erotic verse
Naxos.
2hrs 30mins. £8.99

FORGET THOSE silly cards. Here are two spoken-word offerings that would be perfect St Valentine's Day gifts. Anthony Anderson's selection of amorous verse is eclectic and unusual, offering some familiar delights (Wyatt's "They flee from me that sometime did me seek", Herrick's "A sweet disorder") but many more unfamiliar new treasures.

Arrangement is typological rather than chronological, which allows for telling effects as a 14th-century Chinese poem bumps up against Byron. Naxos effectively juxtaposes music with readings, providing tasters of Grieg's *Erotik*, Sibelius' *Der Liebende* and other aptly romantic strains.

Classic Love Stories
read by Martin Jarvis & Rosalind Ayres
CSA, 3hrs. £8.99

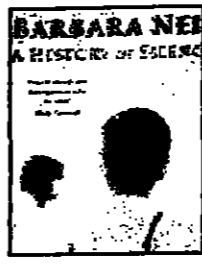
AGAIN, IT is the skill of the selector as well as excellent readers which makes this an outstanding anthology. The two Katherine Mansfield short stories are predictably excellent, but who would have thought that Louisa Little *Women* Alcott could be found writing of bright young things taking hashish (no crime in those days, of course) to cut down their inhibitions? The contrasts work beautifully too: moving us from Hardy's predictably doleful "Melancholy of Hussars" through Baring-Gould's hilarious "Jennifer" to Dickens's whimsically satisfying "Bagman's Story".

One People
by Guy Kennaway
Canongate Books, £6.99, 241pp

SET ON the tarmac-soot sands of Angel Beach, Guy Kennaway's satirical portrait of life in a small Jamaican community ripples with humour and crystal clear seas. Like a sunny Garrison Keillor, Kennaway recounts the personal dramas of the town's leading players over half a century. Jackie, a beautiful prostitute who seduces a well-meaning innocent for his British passport; the tale of "Shepherd Bush George" and his disastrous experience as a football linesman; and the mysterious powers of Sandra and her "bumpa botty". Like Keillor, Kennaway's prose is even better read aloud.

David
by Simon Lee
Phaidon, £12.95, 352pp

WHO BETTER for Phaidon's "Art & Ideas" series than Jacques-Louis David? He was official artist of the Revolution and, after a spell in prison, favourite painter of Napoleon. This great survivor produced his finest work at the heart of the tumult: his unfinished masterpiece "The Oath of the Tennis Court" bears six bayonet holes. While admitting that David displayed a "ruthless and fanatical streak" during the Terror, Lee says the painter combined "powerful commitment and extreme pragmatism". This profusely illustrated book reveals the same is true of his art.

A History of Silence
by Barbara Nell
Pan, £5.99, 291pp

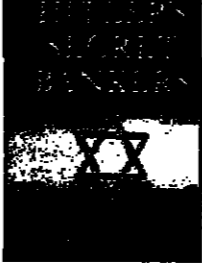
ROBBIE HEATH, a successful London physiotherapist, has spent most of her twenties taking care of her ageing mother and vulnerable older sister. In an attempt to break away from this intense family trinity, she accepts a position in the States, and flies off to Louisiana to take care of a rich old gentleman (and his antebellum mansion). It's not long before mother and sister turn up in New Orleans to join in the fun. Child abuse and its toxic legacy lie at the heart of this disturbing and atmospheric novel, but Nell nimbly avoids the subject's more usual clichés. Author of *The Possession of Della Sutherland*.

Magnum
by Russell Miller
Pimlico, £12.50, 324pp

AT ANY time, there are 500 photographers struggling to join the 50 snappers who make up the Magnum photo agency. While lapping up Miller's superb account, you wonder why they bother. Newcomers have to endure a two-year novitiate before joining a ramshackle outfit described by an ex-member as "amateurish, erratic and inefficient". Bitter words are not uncommon between colleagues, not least Cartier-Bresson's view of grunge specialist Martin Parr: "You are from a completely different planet."

Bear and His Daughter
by Robert Stone
Picador, £6.99, 222pp

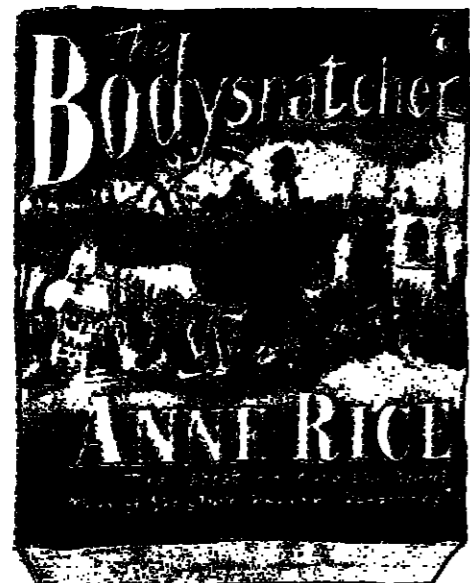
NOT A good collection to read in February, Robert Stone's stories are enough to make you want to go out and shoot yourself. His characters - drunks and junkies of both sexes - wander about in snowdrifts and deserted shopping malls, their heads filled with paranoid fantasies about Vietnam and the Catholic Church. Classics include "Miserere", the tale of two women who steal aborted fetuses; while the title story recounts how a drunken poet, visiting his daughter (also an alcoholic), finds himself at the wrong end of a loaded gun.

Hitler's Secret Bankers
by Adam LeBor
Pocket, £7.99, 400pp

THIS INDICTMENT of the Swiss bankers who benefited from the "holocaust bonanza" makes painful reading. We learn that "whether gold was of monetary quality or dental grade, it would always find a home in Swiss banks". Deposits made by Jews killed in the death camps were not returned to relatives for over 50 years because they had no death certificates. Other Swiss organisations who took Nazi booty ranged from Bally Shoes to the Red Cross. Swiss bankers are making restitution, but LeBor notes they charge 100 francs for tracking down an account.

ERRATA

by FELIX BENNETT



THE PAGES HAVE BEEN INNOVATIVELY INFUSED WITH THE STENCH OF DAMP EARTH AND DEEPENING CLICHE.

BESTSELLERS

John Grisham's domination of the thriller market cannot be in any doubt. *The Testament* has entered the list at number one (as has the paperback of *The Street Lawyer*, published in the same week although not recorded in

our new fiction list). Bill Bryson is the travel list this week, aided, as ever, by a TV tie-in, while Ted Hughes continues to outsell pop psychology and cookery books. Michael Smith's *Station X* is the biggest riser in the non-fiction list and a

new entry, *The Year 1000*, examines life in 1000: wolves and ravens were the millennium bugs of their day. Compiled by Bookwatch on sales over seven days ending 7 February 1999 © Bookwatch Ltd. 1999

ORIGINAL FICTION

TITLE	AUTHOR/PUBLISHER	PRICE	WEEKLY SALES
1 (-)	<i>The Testament</i> John Grisham (Century)	£16.99	5,986
2 (9)	<i>Come Together</i> Josie Lloyd & Emyln Rees (Arrow)	£5.99	5,670
3 (1)	<i>Southern Cross</i> Patricia D Cornwell (Little, Brown)	£16.99	1,710
4 (5)	<i>Liar Birds</i> Lucy Fitzgerald (Black Swan)	£5.99	1,685
5 (3)	<i>The Death of Amy Parris</i> T R Bowen (Penguin)	£5.99	1,676
6 (7)	<i>City Girl</i> Patricia Scanlan (Bantam)	£5.99	1,528
7 (2)	<i>Powerplays: ruthless.com</i> Tom Clancy (Penguin)	£5.99	1,468
8 (4)	<i>It Means Mischief</i> Kate Thompson (Bantam)	£5.99	1,404
9 (-)	<i>Messiah</i> Boris Starling (HarperCollins)	£5.99	1,374
10 (6)	<i>Tiffany's Secret Diary</i> Kate Lock (BBC)	£4.99	864

ORIGINAL NON-FICTION

TITLE	AUTHOR/PUBLISHER	PRICE	WEEKLY SALES
1 (1)	<i>Birthday Letters</i> Ted Hughes (Faber)	£14.99	3,730
2 (2)	<i>Men Are From Mars...</i> John Gray (Thorsons)	£8.99	3,401
3 (9)	<i>Station X: codebreakers</i> Michael Smith (Channel 4)	£14.99	2,704
4 (4)	<i>Little Book of Feng Shui</i> Lillian Too (Element)	£1.99	2,147
5 (5)	<i>The Little Book of Cain</i> Paul Wilson (Penguin)	£1.99	1,809
6 (6)	<i>Seafood Odyssey</i> Rick Stein (BBC)	£18.99	1,784
7 (7)	<i>Notes From a Big Country</i> Bill Bryson (Doubleday)	£16.99	1,684
8 (3)	<i>Della's How to Cook</i> Della Smith (BBC)	£16.99	1,294
9 (-)	<i>The Little Book of Sleep</i> Paul Wilson (Penguin)	£1.99	1,212
10 (-)	<i>The Year 1000</i> Robert Lacey & Danny Danziger (Little, Brown)	£12.99	1,157

TRAVEL

TITLE	AUTHOR/PUBLISHER	PRICE	WEEKLY SALES
1	<i>Notes From a Small Island</i> Bill Bryson (Black Swan)	£6.99	6,639
2	<i>Neither Here Nor There</i> Bill Bryson (Black Swan)	£6.99	1,726
3	<i>Notes From a Big Country</i> Bill Bryson (Doubleday)	£16.99	1,684
4	<i>A Walk in the Woods</i> Bill Bryson (Black Swan)	£6.99	1,212
5	<i>The Lost Continent</i> Bill Bryson (Black Swan)	£6.99	744
6	<i>The Lost Continent</i> Bill Bryson (Abacus)	£6.99	496
7	<i>Lost Continent & Neither Here Nor There</i> Bill Bryson (Secker)	£9.99	218
8	<i>From the Holy Mountain</i> William Dalrymple (HarperCollins)	£8.99	213
9	<i>Round Ireland with a Fridge</i> Yony Hawks (Ebury)	£9.99	142
10	<i>The Field of the Scar</i> Nicholas Luard (Penguin)	£6.99	109

Perky pilgrim's progress

Will Theo's trip across the world's beliefs equal Sophie's success? Not if he merely skates over the surface of religion, argues Karen Armstrong

IN THEO'S *Odyssey*, Catherine Clément attempts to do for spirituality what *Sophie's World* did for philosophy. Theo is a teenager whose liberal Parisian parents have shielded him from religion; he has little knowledge of the life of faith. When he falls prey to a mysterious virus, Theo's Aunt Martha takes him on a trip around the world to learn about the different religions and, perhaps, find a cure. Theo attends a Zen tea ceremony in Japan, an animal sacrifice in Africa, a synagogue service in Prague, and watches the Whirling Dervishes perform their stately meditative dance in Turkey. He has lessons in breathing from a yogi in India, falls into a trance during a Sufi healing rite in Egypt, finds a cure in Tibet, and is reunited with his girlfriend and parents in Delphi. Throughout, Theo and his aunt argue, and Theo voices the questions of secularists confronted with some of the more bizarre rituals and beliefs of religion.

Theo seems to have arrived at an appreciation of the need for spirituality and, at the conclusion, has developed a positive vision of the essential unity of the various traditions. It is not easy to see how he has achieved this, however, since he seems constantly to defend himself from any real exposure to the sacred with a barrage of jaunty cerebral reflections. It is also hard to understand why Aunt Martha insisted on this spiritual journey, since she



Theo's Odyssey
by Catherine Clément
Fleming, £9.99, 576pp



Whirling Dervishes perform their dance Mary Evans

seems to have an entrenched antipathy towards religion (except for Buddhism, which has dispensed with God).

One of the difficulties is that information about religion does not really explain its appeal. Spirituality is a slow, stent and disciplined appropriation of a tradition which gradually transforms the seeker's inner being, in rather the same inexplicable way as we are affected by an aesthetic cultivation of great painting or music. A chatty account of the abstruse debates about the divinity of Christ, for example, does not convey the moral, mystical and imaginative reasons for the adoption of this difficult doctrine: a stumbling attempt to express the universal conviction that the sacred is inseparable from humanity. Clément does provide a useful introduction to some aspects of religious history, and does engage, through Theo,

with fundamental spiritual concepts. But this is a gradual process, far removed from Theo's helter-skelter trip and the spectacular rituals of faith. There is no appreciation of the steady dedication to religious law as a way of bringing the divine into mundane existence.

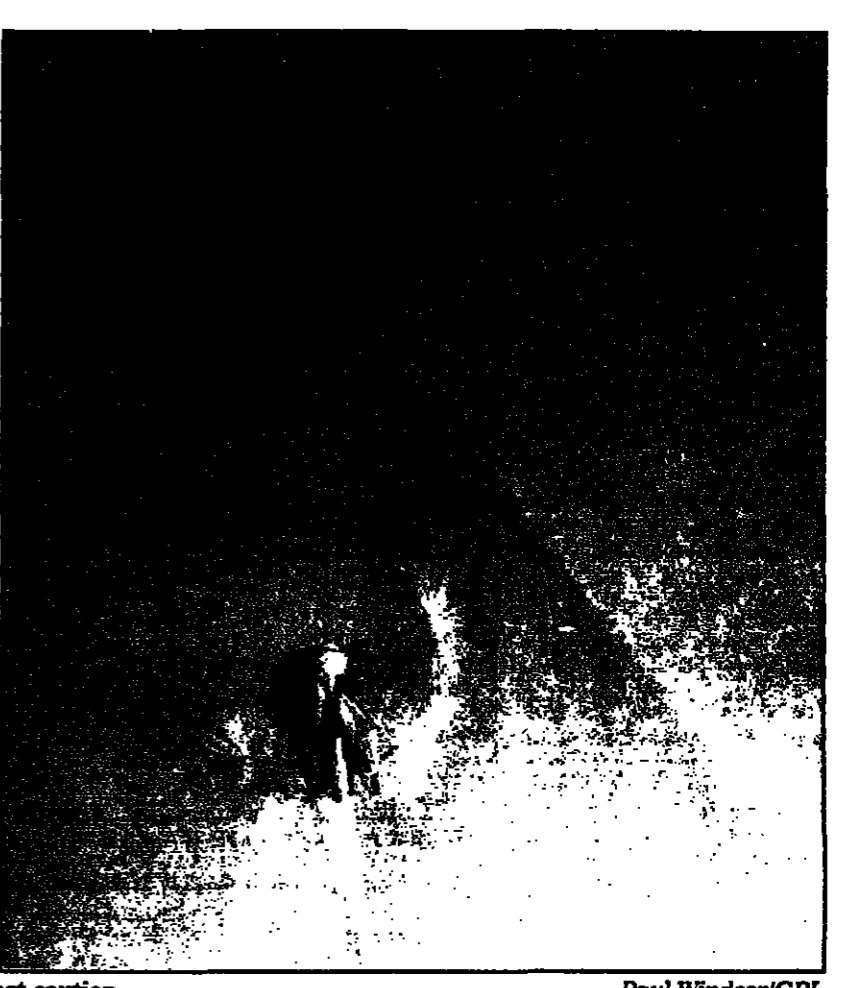
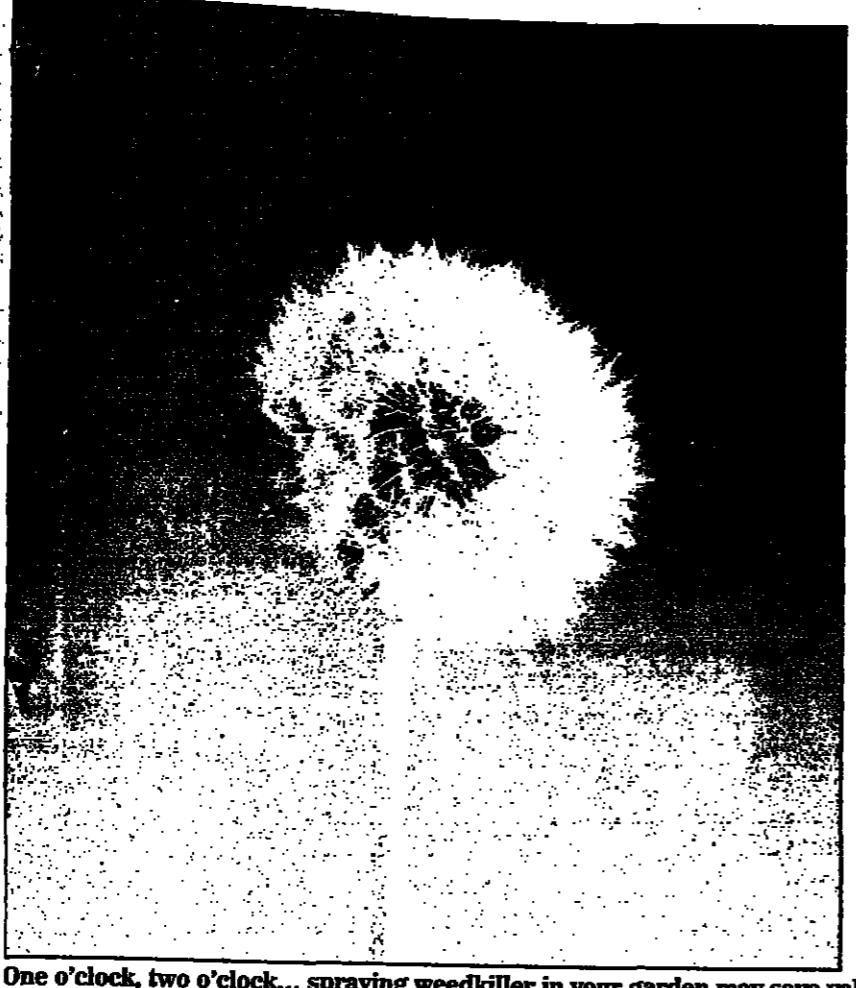
Indeed, the novel is reminiscent of *Sophie's Choice* in that, like Clément, Jostein Gaarder also confines himself to the intrinsic to the detriment of the inner resonance of ideas. In Gaarder's novels, too, the sprightly demeanour of his characters keeps them at arm's length. Despite their frequent tears and noisy emotional outbursts, we never really get close to Theo and Martha either. An exploration of the boy's interior life, as he finds healing, could have demonstrated the way in which these strange doctrines impact upon the deeper reaches of the psyche.

Clément remains determinedly on the surface. While she is careful to correct misapprehensions, some of her information is not wholly accurate. There are significant mistakes in the account of the history of Jerusalem, for example, and misplaced emphases in the stories of Judaism and Christianity. Much is made of the intolerance of monotheistic faith, but not enough of its commitment to compassion and justice.

Nevertheless, Theo's *Odyssey* will perform a valuable service if it introduces its readers to the essential harmony and deep similarity of the world's faiths. At a time of heightened religious militancy, it is important that people learn to take others' faith seriously, and that secularists, like Theo, begin to realise that religion may be more congenial and less alien than they imagine.

The answer is blowing in the wind

Chemical sprays radically cut down on the labour of gardening – but they can also be treacherous friends. By Anna Pavord



One o'clock, two o'clock... spraying weedkiller in your garden may save valuable time, but all such products must be used sparingly and with the utmost caution

Paul Windsor/GPL

Wherever more than one person gardens on the same piece of land, you will find the rumblings of a great weedkiller row. Everyone has had one, and years after the event you can still inadvertently stir up an ancient quarrel by an ill-judged comment. Wandering around a friend's garden recently, I made some inconsequential comment about a pair of Irish yews along either side of an entrance. I could not help noticing that one was a little higher than the other.

That's because he split the weedkiller, said my friend resentfully. Her husband's spill had been fatal to one of the pair and they had had to replant. The incident, already five years old, was still a red-hot issue as far as she was concerned. Time had not healed this rift.

All round the gardening world you hear the echoes of similar recriminations. Sodium chlorate has a lot to answer for ("but I swear I only put it on the drive – honestly"). All gardeners can recite lists longer than that of Beachcomber's cabdrivers, of particularly choice and beloved plants cut down in their prime by a careless swing of the watering-can ("but I didn't see it spill; I really didn't"). Only one thing is common to all tales of weedkiller woe. It is always the other person's fault.

Gardeners of an organic bent may now be feeling very smug and planning letters pointing out that there is no need to use weedkillers at all. In ideal circumstances, this is so. If you have as much time as you want to garden and if you start with a plot reasonably free of real thugs, such as bindweed, couchgrass and ground elder, you can, by mulching and hoeing, keep the place as weed-free as the Sahara Desert.

For five years, I made a conscientious effort to stick to these principles, but in an acre and a half of richly fertile garden, which had been abandoned for the previous 20 years, this was soon a losing battle. Every patch had to be won from a wilderness of briar, elder, nettle and dock and an army of lesser weeds.

When I went off to conquer new territory, the weeds quickly recolonised my oases of planting. Then I found glyphosate and, in the best Mills & Boon tradition, thought I would live happily ever after. Set against what is available, my herbicidal armoury is minute. I do not use weedkiller on lawns, in the vegetable garden, among fruit trees, or round flowers and shrubs. It is used on the drive, some paths and paving, but its primary use (in the early days) was for clearing ground before planting.

In the end, the only feasible way to retrieve my bank from the wilderness was to concentrate on a strip at a time. Each year, between March and September, I treated one strip with glyphosate (Monsanto's Roundup), spraying more than once where ground elder and bindweed were especially persistent. Only when the ground was absolutely clean did I plant it and move on to the next, adjoining strip to repeat the process. The whole thing took years.

Charity begins at home... and blooms in the garden

Plant sales may be great for fund-raising, but having the right produce at the right stage on the day demands military planning. By Ursula Buchan

SURE as echeveria is echeveria, there comes a moment, if you are a keen gardener, when you get involved in growing plants to raise money for charity. Plant sales, large and small, are proven money-spinners (in comparison to white elephant sales, at least) and, although they require commitment in terms of time, greenhouse and some space, equipment and good temper they are great fun. Well, in retrospect at least.



For a late June sale, pelargonium 'Swedish Angel' is a winner Adrian Thomas/A-Z

Last January, I volunteered to organise a plant sale for the church fête. What could be simpler, I thought? After all, I owned a couple of small greenhouses, one of which I could use, and some cold frames, could bank on local good will and promises of pots and plants, and I had a burning desire to be useful, knowing that my hidden talents for making crafts and toys, not to mention chocolate cakes, were best left hidden.

I soon learnt that there are risks to this business. It has to be planned as carefully as a military campaign. To begin with, you must take account of the date of the sale and draw up a timetable. There is always the danger of sowing seeds too early, in a fit of understandable enthusiasm, only to discover that the plants are pot-bound and half-starved by the time they are required.

You have to grow plants that will not necessarily thrive at you like, or are good at growing. Tender annuals, for example, will not shift in late May, for many people will have bought them for planting several weeks earlier. And you have to take account of changing attitudes towards garden-making. Rooted shrub cuttings, though excellent due, will probably not sell

A NEW maze has been designed for the Painswick Rococo Garden, Painswick in Gloucestershire by Angela Newing, compiler of crosswords (and director of medical physics in Gloucestershire's hospitals). Restoration of the garden began 15 years ago, when Lord Dickinson, the owner, discovered a Thomas Robins painting showing how it looked in its heyday in the middle of the 18th century. The maze commemorates the 250th anniversary of the painting and is designed around the figures eight, two and five. The whole thing measures 50 yards by 24 yards, rather larger than the famous maze at Hampton Court Palace. The design is marked out with more than 300 green yew trees and 200 golden ones. Beginners, advises Professor Newing, should start with the five, the easiest of the three interlocking puzzles to crack. At the centre is a solar-powered fountain. The garden is open until November (it's famous for snowdrops, too), Wed-Sun 11am-5pm. Admission £3.

THE GARDEN History Society's Winter Lecture series this year takes

CUTTINGS

NEWS FROM THE GARDENERS' WORLD



Fine Arts, who on 3 March will talk on the obsession of Catherine the Great (pictured) with all things English. All lectures take place at the Scientific Societies Lecture Theatre, New Burlington Place, London W1 and start at 6pm. Tickets cost £7 each or £35 for the six lectures in the series. For more information, or to book tickets in advance, contact Linda Wigley at the GHS, 77 Cowcross St, London EC1M 6BP (0171-608 2409).

BRIAN ALLT, of Sudbury in Suffolk, writes with a comment on the Gardening Workshop in *The Independent* on 28 November: "The worst feature shown in your picture is the mass of orange (not red, I think) brick in the back wall. One of the Dale should try mixing some sieved soil into a bechamel consistency and rubbing it (with gloves) into a sample of brick, allowing it to weather for a few days. If, as I think will be found, it mellows, then she can apply it to the whole area. It may even encourage lichen growth, especially if she adds a bit of fine oatmeal and natural manure. Rain will soon wash off the surplus."

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What's love got to do with it?

A long-awaited honeymoon in Mauritius was a chance to mix business and pleasure for Keith Richards and his new(ish) bride

In the lives of those of us who have chosen to marry, the one holiday you're guaranteed to remember is the honeymoon, if only because its grand title distinguishes it from every other holiday. For my wife, Heather, and me there's something more to sustain the memory of our honeymoon in Mauritius, though.

We put on hold thoughts of cascading waterfalls in the Bambou Mountains, Dodos, an unpronounceable airport and a range of mountains memorably called the Three Breasts. Instead, there was work to be done. Not for us the honeymoon perks offered by our luxury hotel - a trip on the "love boat" at sunset and an upgraded fish supper. Instead came a call, asking: "I know it's your honeymoon, but if I bring a couple of camera crews and some journalists to your hotel, could we hold a press conference?"

This place was a working paradise for us. The local food, recipes and culinary talents of Mauritius were under scrutiny by Heather, a commissioning editor of cookery books. And for me, a consumer law barrister at that time working for Which? magazine, I had a strong urge to investigate consumer rights on the island.

By the time we married, we had been living together for 15 years - it was worth the wait to be able to call our annual holiday a "honeymoon". But indulging our other passions on our "working" honeymoon got us closer to the country and so made a special trip to that unforgettable island even more unique.

The request for a press conference had come from Jayen Chellum, Director of ACIM, the Mauritian Consumers' Association. I'd faxed ahead to tell him we were coming and he jumped at the chance of using me to advance the cause of his organisation. I, in turn, jumped at the chance of helping.

We arranged to meet in Port Louis, across the other side of the island from where Heather and I were staying, and in our hire car we shared the potholed roads with other less roadworthy vehicles - demonstrating that ACIM certainly had a big job ahead of it in terms of vehicle safety.

Thankfully, we were distracted from the state of the roads by the flame-red wild poinsettias lining the sides of the road, at least 100 times bigger than the familiar Christmas pot plants we get in Britain, and by wild dogs too sleepy to bark but not too sleepy to wander suicidally in front of the car.

The island's capital is hemmed in by an impressive natural amphitheatre, formed by soaring mountains. We arrived safely in Port Louis, an exciting mix of Indian, African, Chinese and European influences that is good for the culinary culture but not so good for the ACIM. Consumer campaigning is a political business in any country and the surprisingly harmonious mix of races and religions here makes the job of whipping up a popular consumer vote practically impossible.

We'd arranged to meet Jayen in the old colonial line barracks and swiftly moved on to an excellent Chinese restaurant. Tucked away in a back street that we would never have known was there, let alone venture into on our own, the food was delicious. In Mauritius, unlike Britain, the origins of Chinese food are very close and it showed in the taste of the meal and in the variety of dishes on offer. There was not a sweet and sour prawn ball in sight and Heather was in her element, scribbling notes as if fried rice was going out of fashion.



When you are on a 'working' honeymoon, there just isn't time to sail hand in hand into the sunset on the hotel's 'love boat'

ACIM HQ was a shock, housed as it was in a small, three-room office by the barracks with one computer and an obvious lack of funds. Over lunch we had learned that this Consumers' Association had a busy and successful past but a seemingly impossible burden for the future. Consumerism has come so far in the West that it was sad to see the paucity of facilities available here to help advance their cause.

The journalists Jayen had arranged to meet us in Port Louis had not turned up after all but Heather's food research continued as we spent a number of days wandering the streets in nearby towns and scouring the food markets for unusual produce. The mainstream

cooking in Mauritius is influenced largely by Indian flavours and street sellers ply their freshly cooked food to hungry locals. Among the delicacies Heather sniffed out for our delectation were *gouteaux piments* (crisp, spicy balls of deep-fried split peas and green chillies).

Back at our hotel, Heather had already interviewed the chef who, she discovered, often came to Britain to check on gastronomic trends. He was as keen to learn from her as she was from him and, night after night, he produced surprise dishes of local specialties for us - much to the envy of other guests.

Then came another call. "I might be able to get a newspaper journalist to come to the hotel to ask some

questions," said Jayen. By now we were fast approaching the end of our honeymoon and we invited Jayen over to our hotel for dinner. That last night was spent deep in conversation plotting a consumer revolution in this fascinating country.

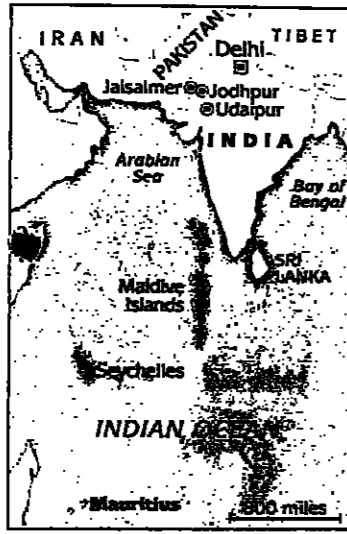
I discovered that for the local people, there is a lot of work to be done to achieve what we take for granted as basic protection in the West and, with such a lot for the consumer movement to do, I realised I had spent time in a consumer lawyer's nirvana. Was Heather upset? No. The shark curry and sea urchins the chef had specially prepared for her soon arrived. And, as for the press conference, it never happened.

FACT FILE



THE GOVERNMENT of Mauritius does not allow charter flights, so the only direct services from Britain are on Air Mauritius (0171-434 4375) from Heathrow and Manchester and British Airways (0245 222111) from Gatwick. BA flies three times each week (two of these flights stop to refuel at Nairobi). Air Mauritius flies non-stop twice a week from Heathrow, once a week from Manchester.

Numerous companies offer holidays based on these flights, including Abercrombie & Kent (0171-559 8632), British Airways Holidays (0870 242424) and Hayes & Jarvis (0181-748 5050). You can also sail from Felixstowe to Mauritius in four weeks on a cargo vessel, for around £2,500 one-way. Strand Voyages (0171-836 6363). Further information: the Mauritius Government Tourist Office, 32 Elvaston Place, London SW7 (0171-581 0294).



When mash is the food of love, eat up

When Husain Husaini met his wife-to-be in India, she was suffering from a craving for mashed potato - and he from an incurable passion

IT WAS amoebic dysentery that led to my first sight of Jessica, the woman who would become my wife. Early in 1991, I was lying on a seven rupee-a-night dorm bed in the Deepak rest house, a typically squalid backpacker's hostel in the Indian desert city of Jaisalmer. Fly-infested and freezing cold, the Deepak's saving feature was its location. Built in the walls of Jaisalmer's fort, it didn't take much imagination to be transported to the days when the town was fought over by Rajasthani princes.

Jessica was staying in the room next door, suffering terribly from an evil bug picked up on her travels. In India's backpacking hostels, it's almost expected to chat to everyone you meet so when I found Jess on the roof a few days later, I had no need of an excuse to go over and talk to her. She was sitting amongst the battlements in a turret of the fort. Behind her, the Thar desert rolled away to Pakistan beneath the bluest of skies. Our conversation was pretty standard for backpackers: the places we'd been; the hassles we'd met and, of course, the bowel problems we'd suffered.

Jess was beginning to recover and was very funny about the indignities of being infested by amoebas. She also moaned about the food, which she blamed for her predicament. She spoke with longing of her favourite meals at home, top of her bland wish-list being mashed potato. By this point I was completely won over by Jess and her acidic wit and her potato-craving gave me the perfect opportunity to spend more time with her. The day before I'd been to a cafe where I'd seen mash, not exactly an Indian speciality, on the menu. I offered to take her there.



The dusty desert town of Jaisalmer

We left the Deepak and entered the labyrinth of cobbled lanes that made up the fort, eventually crossing out through the portulacis gate and into the main street of the town. Jess was obviously still not that well and it was quite a trek through the crowds to the cafe. She pointed out several perfectly acceptable alternatives on the way, but I insisted that if she wanted mashed potato, we had to keep going.

When we got there, the cafe was dingier than I remembered, but Jess didn't notice as she dashed behind a curtain into what passed for a toilet. She was a bit shaky when she finally came out, but cheered up when the menu arrived and hungrily ordered her mash. The plate of rice-water goo that appeared

shortly afterwards didn't seem to be what she had in mind and she complained bitterly.

Days slipped by in Jaisalmer but I was far too smitten to allow the mashed potato incident to put me off. She forgave me, but our relationship didn't seem to be progressing, at least not the way I wanted. I did, however, manage to persuade her to let me go with her to Udaipur, her next destination.

If romance is on your mind, this is the place to go. It's a hazy, hilly town built on the banks of the island-strewn Lake Pichola. On one of the islands is a palace built by a Maharana, now converted into a legendary hotel. Far too expensive for us, but we scraped together enough money for dinner. The posse of backpackers who came with us,

however, were a bit of a hindrance for what I had in mind.

Somehow I managed to slip Jess away for a stroll along the lake front. The sun was setting, the stars coming out: an ideal moment to express my growing affection and perhaps even get a snog. But then some of the others discovered us and the moment was gone. This was getting ridiculous. I'd known Jess for almost two weeks in heart-breakingly beautiful settings and yet hadn't managed to communicate my desires.

The next day was make or break. Jess was planning to head further south and I couldn't keep traipsing about after her unless I knew what her feelings were. That afternoon, unable to contain myself, I clumsily burst out: "So, are we going to get something together?" For a second I thought I'd blown it as Jess spluttered and laughed, but she seemed to be happy about the prospect and in that moment my life changed for ever. By a quirk of fate, that night was the eve of the Hindu festival of Holi, celebrating the end of winter. And, as we sat canoodling on the roof of our hostel, thousands of fireworks exploded over the lake as if they were just for us.

Getting there: the cheapest flights to India are generally on airlines from the former Soviet Union. You can expect to pay around £300 return to Delhi on an airline such as Armenian Airlines via Yerevan, booked through Classic Travels (0171-499 2222). Indian Airlines (00 91 11 331 0517) has daily flights from Delhi to Udaipur, or there is a train six days a week to complete the same journey. Jaisalmer can be best reached by bus or train from Jodhpur, about 275km away.

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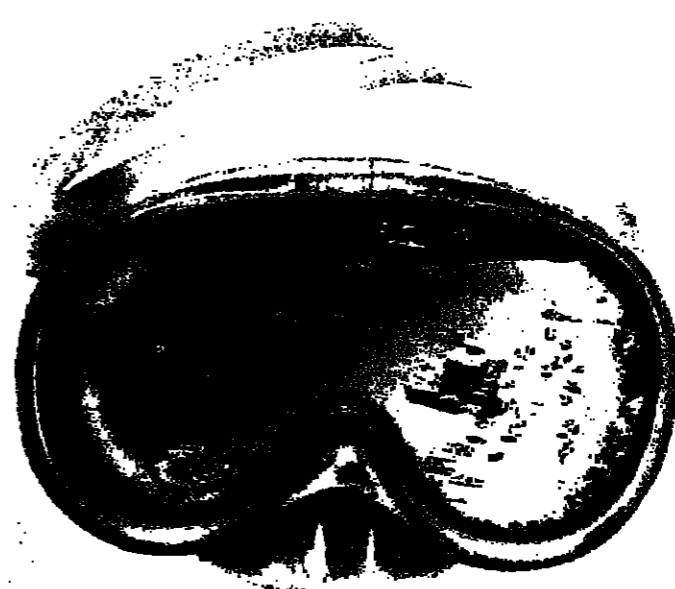
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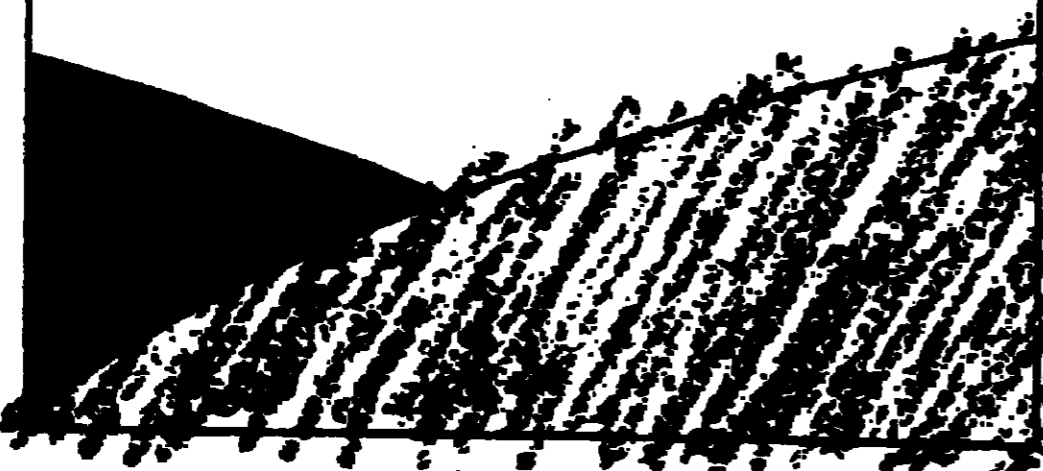
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So, do architects really live in minimalist houses that are a homage to chrome? Well, some of them do, as Peter Conchie discovered on a new London tour

Shoes, it has been said, reveal a lot about a person. Imagine your reaction if 25 strangers rang your doorbell one Saturday morning and spent the next 45 minutes tramping and poking and clumping around your house. Would it be a case of shoes on or shoes off?

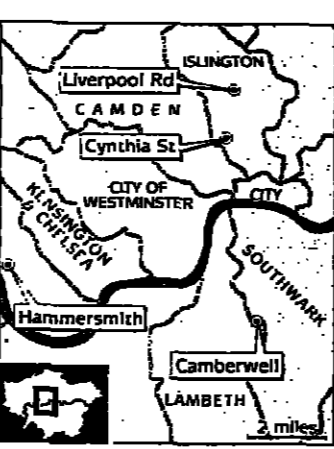
The first of Architectural Dialogue's spring tours asked this very question to some of London's most prominent architects last weekend and, in the coming weeks, artists and loft-owners will be among those facing the same dilemma as Londoners traipse around in a series of coach-driven excursions designed to stimulate discussion and debate about architecture and design.

Camdenwell was the first stop of the day and our group of 25 inspected, in the benevolent spirit of *Hello!* magazine, the beautiful home of Selina and John Eger. Shoes evidently weren't an issue for this charming couple. They bought the three-storey former laundry and print factory in 1995 and have since adapted it to their needs; the ground floor is a typical architect's space that is both stylish and functional.

The middle and top floors are both domestic spaces, the highest level being a self-contained studio with twin roof terraces. All very swish and Nineties - due in part to expensive detailing such as the Smeg cooker and Vola taps - but the success is in its airiness, created by a curved roof and a triptych of enormous sliding windows that ingeniously retract to reveal that rarest of sights: a pleasant view of Camdenwell.

After a short drive through the snarled Saturday-morning streets of south London, the second property, The Deckhouse in Hammersmith, came as a total contrast to the warm and modest design of the Egers. This, presumably, was the intention. Converted from the former Duckham's oil depot, it is described by its architect, John Young (a director of Richard Rogers, which is based next door), as a flat. In a purely technical sense he's right; there is one bed, a cooking-surface, a single study of sorts. However, Young doesn't do rooms, he does spaces, and this vast "flat" could comfortably accommodate several houses within its voluminous boundaries.

The main living-space has a heated floor made of polished concrete and finished with beeswax. Huge, heavy glass doors suck shut with an impersonal precision, and a yellow steel-and-teak staircase



wraps dramatically around the walls, rising to an orange bed-platform suspended from the ceiling by four slender steel rods. Four floors up, with expansive floor-to-ceiling windows, it offers a spectacular perspective on the river while the stairs continue up to a 360-degree roof observatory.

According to Young, "it leans towards the Japanese belief that only through function and purpose is beauty attainable". A pile of cash the height of a skyscraper doubtless helped, too. The bathroom - or, rather, the "bathroom tower" - is accessed through an airlock, constructed from translucent glass bricks with a clear glass-disc ceiling, and is located on the roof in the manner of a modernist outhouse.

It is unquestionably a staggering building, its impact amplified by an absolute lack of clutter and personal possessions. A copy of *The Independent* and a pair of binoculars were the only signs of habitation; everything else was slammed away in uniform, safe-sized stainless steel units. Some of my fellow tourists detected, in the architectural subtext, an overly masculine monument to someone with - how best to put it? - a well-defined sense of their own self worth. Such excess, such opulence, such perfection. On the plus side, though, there is a great view of Craven Cottage, Fulham's football ground.

Then it was shoes on - did I mention that it was a "shoes off" kind of place? - back on the coach, and on to King's Cross. The Flower House is Peter Romanuk's creation, a modern, steel-and-glass-framed dwelling in Cynthia Street, an unpromising stub of a road in the grubby underarm of Angel.

Footwear wasn't an issue in this domestic dwelling. There was a wet J-cloth in the sink and a reassuring

patch of mildew on the shower curtain. "It's nice to know you're human," one woman remarked. Romanuk's pad is arranged on a garage model - "Not so much a home, more a light industrial unit" - though a reasonably conventional, open-plan oblong downstairs, up above it comes into its own.

The space is divided into six units, the front three of which make up double bedrooms. The rest of the space is a highly unconventional wall-less arrangement of shower, bath and dresser. No one was brave enough to use the toilet, which sat in a cupboard-sized space behind a sliding door of translucent glass.

The tour didn't consist of passive appreciation, though. Subtle glances of criticism were exchanged as people wandered about comparing the different houses. Some were less subtle: "Look at the state of the decking," one woman whispered archly in one abode.

The last two houses, off Liverpool Road, Islington, are home to next-door neighbours Peter St John and Marcus Lee, former colleagues at Richard Rogers. In the first of these, St John revealed that "the house is intended to be more relaxed than architect's houses tend to be".

Despite this, it was shoes off as we went upstairs. The wooden floors were treated with a clear, stainless lacquer; curtains were replaced by rolls of felt that hooked above the windows only when required, and a wide strip of Tribord (the material used to make billboards) functioned as a contemporary balustrade. It was something of a chaotic space ("intentionally rather disorientating"), with wonderful high windows.

Stepping next door, to the last house, the tranquil Marcus Lee, revealed himself as a pragmatist. His warm, timber-framed house is arranged around a central atrium that opens the space and connects floors of the building.

This, too, was a real house, inhabited by real people, which creaked and gave. We wandered around, shoes on, occasionally knocking things over, guilt tinged with relief that here there were in fact things to knock over.

For a copy of the spring programme send an SAE to: Architectural Dialogue, West Hill House, 6 Swain's Lane, London N6 6QU or call 0181-341 1371 for bookings and information. The next Architects' Houses tour is on 29 May, £39 adults or £25 concessions



Lolling on John Young's sophisticated bed-platform, you can peer out at Fulham's football ground

Tom Craig

Journey to the Source

Ever since the 'East meets West' craze hit British shores, bamboo has been "in", fashionable both for its good looks and because it is a genuinely eco-friendly resource. Lightweight, durable (it's bullet-proof), versatile (it's been used to make everything from scaffolding and baskets to lightbulb filaments and Chinese food) and just about the fastest-growing plant on the planet (it can grow more than 120cm in 24 hours), its anchor-like qualities even help to prevent deforestation in China.

If you'd prefer to see bamboo in its natural habitat rather than on a Surrey coffee table, though, the place to visit is the Bamboo Sea, one of the largest stretches of bamboo forest

(about 12,000 acres) in south-west China. There are around 30 types of bamboo here, including Nan, Mao, Golden, Fishpole, Turtleback and Flower bamboo, so you should find something you like.

The Bamboo Sea is a national park, set over the puddle of moist green vegetation, ink-black pools and gushing waterfalls that covers the valleys and mountains near Yibin, a 60km bus ride (about 75p) away. It is an amazing place to look at - perhaps too amazing. The *Lonely Planet Guide to South-West China* (£12.99) warns that it has also become one of the country's "most ruthlessly efficient" tourist traps. On top of the national park entrance fee (about £1.10) there are

several other tickets to be paid and, in each valley, further fees and a trail of overpriced restaurants to shell out on. Lonely Planet advises you not to be put off by all this, as it is still an extraordinary place to visit, but to "head along the trail as far as you can go and enjoy the peace and quiet away from the ticket-sellers and the carved bamboo-sellers". Get off the bus at Wanling and seek out the waterfalls at Forgetting Worries Valley and the gloomy

pools of Black Brook Valley. From here, there's a cable car up to the top of the ridge (about £1.50 one-way). Alternatively, head for the 20m-high bamboo at Jadeite Corridor or the Looking at the Sea Pavilion, where the view sweeps down across the canopy of wispy bamboo heads that gives the Bamboo Sea its name.

If you want to take some bamboo home with you, you will find the stuff all over China - a friend recently picked up a set

of five bamboo paintbrushes in Peking's Saturday flea market for Y20 (around £1.50). Alternatively, wait until you're back in Britain and nip along to Emily Readett-Bayley in south London (0171-231 3939). The covetable range of pure bamboo designs here is sleek and modern and has little to do with the mass-produced Victorian furniture or Seventies caneware that British people have come to associate with bamboo. Pieces include the bent bamboo

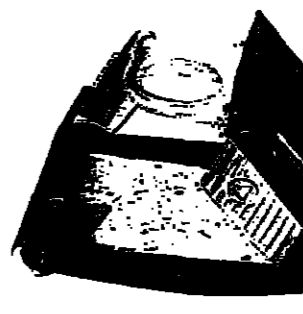
chair, £255, and two-person seat, £510, shown left - perfect for lolling back on and calculating the number of bamboo paintbrushes you'd have to sell to finance a trip back to China. If you book today, Bridge The World's (0171-911 0900) special offer fare of £310 on KLM from the UK to Peking, works out at around 200 sets of paintbrushes.

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look no further than the Micromap. This is a nifty little gadget that can be worn round your neck. You read the playing card-sized maps (it holds up to six at one time) by moving the

viewer around to magnify the different areas of the map in turn but you'll need both hands to do this so it's best to stop pedalling first, if you're on a bike.

Available in various series (including road maps, UK cities, Ordnance Survey maps, cycle routes, weekend walks, US cities, US national parks, London streets and London guides), the viewer costs £14.99 and each series of maps costs £9.99 (ring 0800 783 8740 for stockists or e-mail: info@micromap.co.uk).
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SHOULD YOU ever decide to apply for a rail franchise, this is how it works. You look at the services that the Government requires you to run; consider the rolling stock available to you; and offer a deal that enables you to make a healthy profit. What you do not do is take part in a lottery with all the other would-be train operators and cross your fingers, hoping for one of the better franchises.

Yet anyone listening to Allan McLean of Virgin Trains on Radio 5 Live on Thursday morning would be forgiven for thinking that Richard Branson had been most unfortunate in picking the booby prizes in the privatisation raffle. Mr McLean was seeking to justify his company's dismal performance in the latest reliability statistics.

"What you've got to remember," he said, "is that Virgin Cross Country runs the longest routes in Britain, such as Aberdeen to Plymouth, and we have to operate them using locomotives that date back to the early Sixties."

And what you've got to remember, Mr McLean, is that all this was painfully apparent when Virgin decided to tender for the franchise. Your company looked at the woefully underfunded railway industry and successfully bid for two of its most neglected components, in the hope of making lots of money. So don't express surprise at the difficulty of providing a decent service.

LIKE MILLIONS of other travellers, I often book with Britain's biggest holiday company, Thomson. A fortnight ago I explained how the tour operator had written urging me to



SIMON CALDER
Was Richard Branson just unfortunate in the rail privatisation raffle? Not exactly...

change my travel agent from the local branch of "Preferred Places to a Thomson's International, located beside the A6 in Stockport. I live in London, which is nearly 200 miles away.

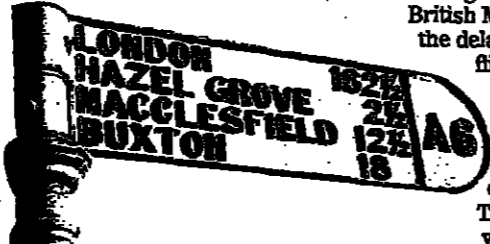
That really puts the "travel" in travel agency, I thought as I battled through the wintry wastes to this week to book my May Day holiday to Greece, of Stockport. To be fair, Thomson says: "It is not our intention to send our customers all over the country to book a holiday; in fact, one of the main criteria used to suggest their nearest Thomson Preferred Agent shop was for it to be in their post code area or within 15 miles of their home. However, with a substantial mailing such as this there are bound to be teething problems."

But why should I change agents anyway? Thomson says: "For those who have travelled with us in the

past and want their next holiday to be with Thomson, a Preferred Agent is the best place to visit."

After a three-hour journey through sub-zero temperatures, Miss Ellie's International was definitely the best place to warm up. My enquiry was dealt with promptly, politely and there are relatively few operators offering holidays in the Ionian Islands over the first May bank holiday, but the agent recommended First Choice and Priceright as two that do. That is a virtue of an independent travel agent; big vertically integrated chains such as Thomson (owner of Lunn Poly) and Airtours (Globe Places) make no secret of their aim to sell "in-house" holidays. But how independent is your agent? You should be aware that the Travelworld chain is now part of Airtours, and that 350 members of the Advantage consortium have signed up for a marketing push with Airtours. Be careful out there - or make the long hike to Stockport.

MISS ELLIE'S International is handy for Manchester airport, so I called in there, too. On Wednesday delays and cancellations were the order of the day. The explanations were baffling, though: passengers waiting for the BA flight to Milan were told, "This service is currently technical". I should jolly well hope it is, like every modern aircraft, thoroughly technical. And British Midland explained the delay of the London flight by saying it was "Because of Heathrow", as though there were explanation enough. My Virgin Train, meanwhile, was right on time.



SNOW REPORTS in association with WorldCover Direct

Resort	Area open	Comment	Slopes (cm) Lvr	Upr	Last snow	Temp	Forecast
ANDORRA							
Pas de la Casa 100%		Fresh snow	85	105	08.02	-14C	Bright
AUSTRIA							
Pinkenberg...100%		Lots of powder	65	190	11.02	-8C	Unsettled
Obertauern...100%		Superb conditions	65	270	09.02	-15C	Unsettled
CANADA							
Whistler...100%		Deep powder	200	370	10.02	-12C	Flurries
FRANCE							
Gros Ventoux 100%		Fresh snow	220	280	10.02	-10C	Chingly
Val d'Isère...90%		Universally good	150	350	10.02	-6C	More snow
ITALY							
Gressoney...100%		Both sectors open	70	110	10.02	-8C	Chingly
SWEDEN							
Silen...80%		Colder	60	80	05.02	-11C	Cloudy
SCOTLAND							
Calton...80%		Good conditions	25	90	10.02	1C	Bright
SWITZERLAND							
St Moritz...100%		Good conditions	80	120	10.02	-10C	Chingly
UNITED STATES							
Sugarbush...80%		Packed snow	30	90	03.02	-1C	Pty cloudy

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The Internet offers a selection of websites that give details of the latest snow conditions as well as last-minute offers

The season to come

For skiers not daunted by the extreme winter weather that claimed a dozen lives this week, Stephen Wood assesses the prospects for late bookings

A few weeks ago, the major ski operators were getting worried. The season had gone tolerably well: nothing to write home about, but sales were generally at a similar level to those of 1997/8, despite the dark clouds hovering over the retail sector. What was causing gloom among the operators, however, was the weather over the Alps, particularly in France, which saw the biggest sales growth early in the season.

There is nothing like a good snowfall to stir up those skiers who like to book late, after the Christmas and New Year rush. Unfortunately, there had been nothing like a good snowfall in the Alps since early in the season, and late bookings were running at a low level.

All that changed in the last week of January. A cold weather system dropped up to three metres of snow on the Alpine resorts, and the booking agents' phones started ringing just as anxious operators were announcing their first special offers for February. It was the perfect scenario for late bookers: deep snow and low prices. A quick flick last weekend through the deals available for departures on the 20/21 and 27 February revealed discounts of up to 45 per cent.

True, the best bargains were for Norway and Bulgaria, where the snow is not so good as in the Alps; but there were big savings, too, in Verbier (38 per cent) and the Austrian resorts of Scheffau

(31 per cent) and Niderau (30 per cent), all of which had excellent snow conditions - although the avalanche danger, tragically manifested in Chamonix, meant that some ski areas were closed.

At the beginning of every season, the operators' chorus is that there will be few bargains for late bookers; but by the middle of every season - barring highly unusual circumstances - bargains become available. Since no operator wants to find itself in a position where it only had more capacity, the tendency is to err on the generous side. This season overall capacity seems likely to exceed demand by 10 per cent, unless the recent snowfalls stimulate better-than-usual late bookings. Cutting prices eats away at already paper-thin margins; but the operators' fixed costs (charter flights, accommodation and coach transfers to which they are committed in advance) mean that any income will improve their profit-and-loss balance.

For those skiers who travel in groups, want specific resort accommodation, or are restricted to peak-period trips by school holidays (don't look for bargains this week: it's half term), booking early is essential. For others, the argument for late booking has grown stronger in the last two years. Wouldn't you prefer to know the conditions in a resort before booking a holiday there? The increasingly comprehensive

snow-report sites on the Internet make that possible. And electronic technology makes finding ski holiday bargains that much easier.

The best of the snow-report websites are those provided by Ski Hotline and the Ski Club of Great Britain. Both offer information, regularly updated in theory, if not always in practice, on a daily basis, on conditions in resorts - 180 of them on Ski Hotline's site, 200 on the Ski Club's. Ski Hotline offers more detail on snow conditions and weather, plus a link to extensive "profiles" of the more popular resorts; the Ski Club site is less encyclopaedic, but includes a feature of particular appeal to snow-seekers, namely an index of those resorts with the best conditions, judged by the depth of snow on the upper slopes, the amount of powder, and the greatest snowfall in the previous week.

Just how reliable this information is depends, of course, on its sources. Traditionally snow reports come from resort tourist offices, which have no incentive to understate local cover. According to Paul Wise,

who runs the Ski Hotline site, "Some of them give reliable information, but there are others who will spin you a yarn."

The Ski Club uses its own resort contacts to supply the data - although local knowledge about snow cover can still normally be traced back to the resort management. What Ski Hotline does is to seek to corroborate such information via a network of 20-odd reporters in the Alps and by consulting local reps from those operators to which Ski Hotline supplies snow reports. Crystal and Neilson among them. Despite their different retrieval methods, however, the two websites are fairly consistent in their assessments of snow cover in the individual ski resorts. I have used these and other sources for the survey of Europe's ski areas, below.

Finding the best bargains is not so straightforward. Some websites provide a booking service; the wide-ranging Complete Skier site, for example, links a late-availability list from Ski Solutions with an abbreviated version of Ski Hotline's snow reports, and 15ki offers a similar package. But the most comprehensive source of late-booking bargains is the Teletext pages. Going through them (I read 88 last weekend) is a slow, laborious process; and because the four operators provide such limited information on their own pages, it takes detective work to identify the holidays and thus calculate the discount on the brochure prices.

Having done my consumer research on Teletext for next weekend's departures (finding an average discount of 33 per cent), I rang Ian Simkins, ski manager at Thomson, for an expert view. He admitted that sales for the week from 20/21 February had been "rickier" this season than in previous years, so there are good deals available. Look to Italy, he said, for the best bargains, and flights from Birmingham and Manchester. (He wasn't kidding: Thomson has a basic, self-catering week in the Italian Alps priced at only £189, flying from Manchester.)

Mr Simkins is keeping a close eye on the market now, because his company is developing its own late-booking website. I had a preview of it, and was very impressed. It is a delightfully straightforward, easy-to-use site; you check a resort's snow report (the data is admittedly too limited at the moment, with only weekly updates from Thomson rep), and - if conditions are good enough - scan the company's deals there. Other operators will surely copy such a good idea, and this time next season, the argument for late bookings should be even stronger.

Website addresses mentioned include: www.skihotline.co.uk; www.skiclub.co.uk; www.complete-skier.com; and also www.onski.com. Alternatively, see Teletext, page 226. Your Money, page 8, today features a guide to ski insurance

JASPER REES

It suggests a lack of confidence that 'Days Like These' had to gun for the most risible decade. Pick on a decade your own size

WEEKEND REVIEW

PAGE 32

SOMETHING TO DECLARE
A SURVEY OF SNOW CONDITIONS AROUND EUROPE

you can't go wrong in Austria. The weather outlook is unsettled, but temperatures should continue to stay low.

France: All over the French Alps, with the sole exception of the southern resorts, snow is extremely plentiful. Châtel has 400cm on its upper slopes, while Flaine has good powder and a total depth again of 400cm. The problem in some resorts is an excess of snow: avalanche risk has restricted some ski areas, notably - for obvious reasons - at Chamonix and Argentière. The snow in the French Pyrenees and Andorra, however, is not nearly so good. Temperatures have been very low this week, but changeable weather is forecast.

Italy: Although the eastern side of the Alps has missed out on the big snowfalls, all the main Italian ski resorts have reasonable cover - which was not the case earlier in the season. Among the areas which could do with more snow cover are Claviere and Cortina, and the Milky Way resorts; but skiers at Madisimo and Courmayeur (which has 200cm on its upper slopes) can have no complaints about conditions. Unsettled weather is expected.

Switzerland: As in France, the sheer quantity of snow has caused problems, with some ski areas - notably at Wengen and Grindelwald - being restricted by avalanche danger or extreme weather conditions. Elsewhere in Switzerland the skiing is excellent, with Villars and Les Diablerets looking particularly good. SW

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So profound has been the sights and sounds of Andalusia's imagery has been summed up as a cliché for anything Spanish, yet Andalusia is in many ways completely different from any other part of Spain, be it the attitude to life of its people or its culture which owes more to its 'Gitanos' (Gypsies) roots than to its Moorish and Moorish ancestry than it does to Spain proper. There is a vibrancy and a lust for living which is apparent in the music and pursuits of its people, be it flamenco, the Zapateado dance, or the flamenco guitar.

The Andalusian live in an ancient magnificent scenery of rolling countryside, mountain peaks of the Sierras, and plains that stretch as far as the eye can see with white walled houses glistening against a brilliant light. The Moorish and Catholic influences can be seen wherever you go - the Moorish Alcazar of Seville, the Catholic Cathedral in Seville, the Mezquita in Cordoba, the Alhambra and Generalife Gardens at Granada, contrasted with the secular almost British of the old school in Jerez de la Frontera, and the dramatic hillside towns such as Ronda which owes its appearance from a more recent history.

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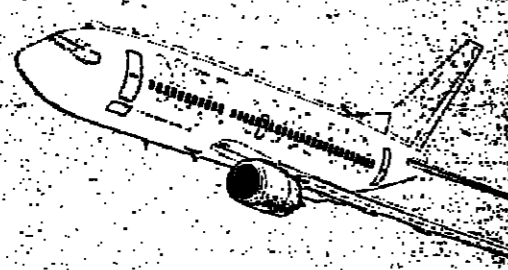
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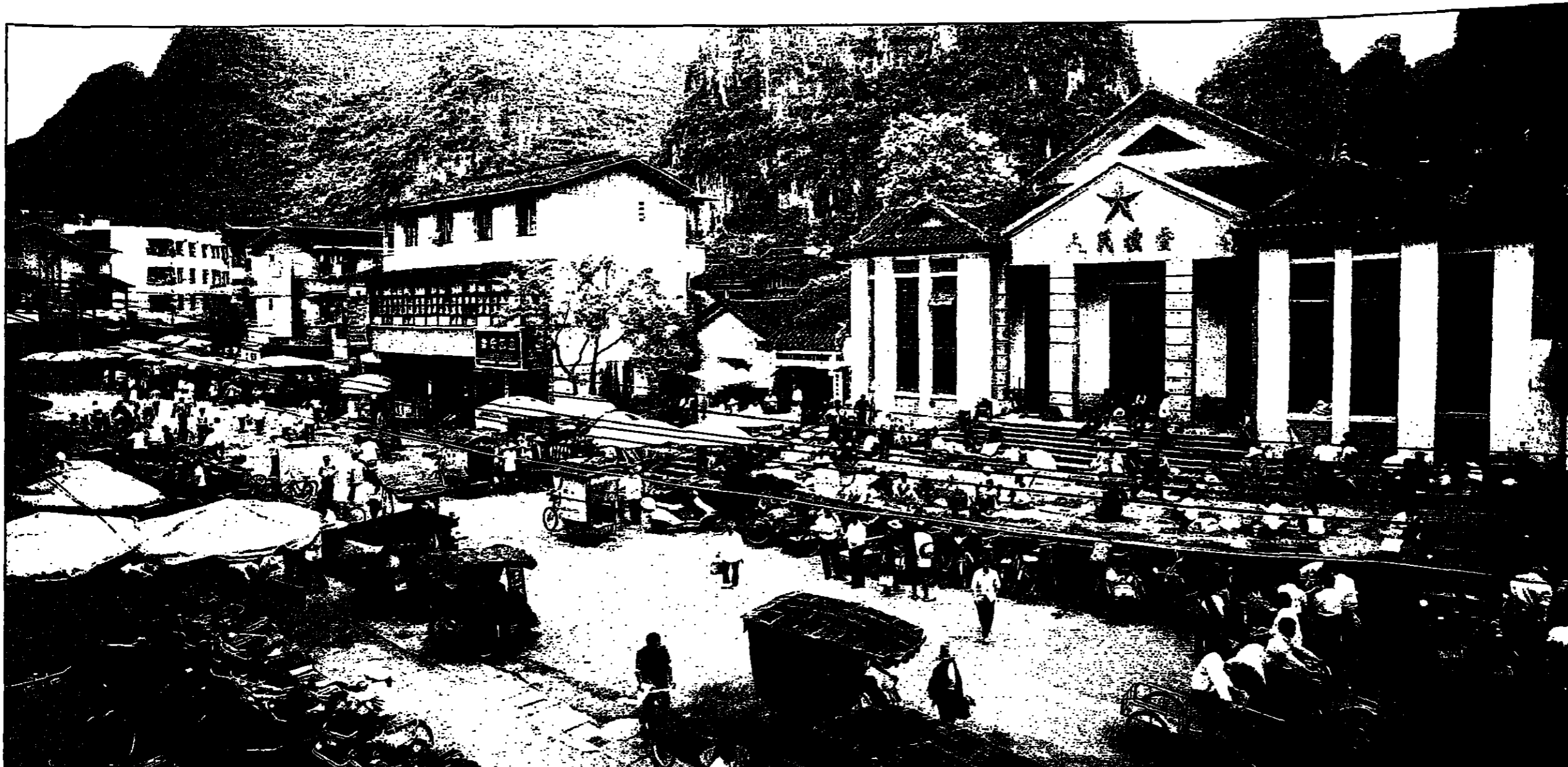
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The mossy limestone peaks that tower over Yangshuo's streets and paddy fields have inspired Chinese poets to describe it as the most beautiful place on earth

Colin Pantall

A different kind of country life

In the first of three stories to celebrate Chinese New Year, Katherine Tanko tours Yangshuo's limestone peaks and paddies

Beyond the souvenir stalls and tourist cafés, everyday Yangshuo lives on. Tractors heading for the fields putter noisily down cobbled streets; men huddle outside shops playing mahjong, while kids wielding badminton rackets leap and squeal in the streets. And visitors are welcome. But things have changed in Yangshuo. This small country town in Guangxi province, south-east China, has created its own special niche in the country's burgeoning tourist trade. Cashing in on the steady stream of tourists from nearby Guilin—described by generations of Chinese poets as the most beautiful place on earth, and better known than Yangshuo—more people are forgoing the safety of Guilin's star-rated hotels to wallow in Yangshuo's authentic country charms. The town now boasts enough amenities to serve as the ideal base for exploring Guangxi, and travel agents in town can arrange tours, tickets and excursions to the local attractions such as Dong villages and the famous rice terraces of

Longsheng. But there is also plenty to do right here. There are bicycles for hire, and the aquatically minded can even rent kayaks for a day on the river. If you stay outside beyond a few days, you can sign up for some Mandarin, 'tai chi' or Chinese cookery lessons. For a first-hand glimpse of country life, though, you can join up with Li Yun Zhao, one of a dozen local farmers who offer tailor-made tours into the countryside. These popular tours give visitors a chance to experience village life at close quarters and to sample authentic rural cuisine, since lunch in the guide's own home is included. A bicycle, some basic English and a notebook to record the glowing comments of satisfied customers are all that's needed to launch a lucrative career as a rural tour guide. Li first began giving tours in 1992. "I needed to make money," she explained, as we set out from Yangshuo on foot. "My house was very old and I wanted to send my three children to school. A few women were already doing tours and I thought, hey, I can do that." We cut down a dirt path and

were soon lost in the undulating karst rock landscape for which the Guangxi region is famous. Mossy limestone peaks tower above a patchwork of fish farms, citrus groves and paddies, laced with meandering, jade-green streams. A group of women, knee-deep in paddy mud, teased Li as we passed, scolding her for strolling around when there was work to be done. I

was invited to roll up my trousers and get down in the mud to try my hand at transplanting the tender rice seedlings. Collective farming ended here in 1981, when every family was allotted a portion of land. Li spoke with candour about life for the contemporary Chinese peasant. "Before, if you were lazy or worked hard, you got the same. So no one bothered to

work hard and there were some bad harvests. Now, if people work hard, they can do well for themselves." We passed through a small village where the sound of voices reciting lessons echoed from a schoolroom. On one grassy verge a lone toddler sat clutching a rice bowl while his mother worked in the fields nearby. "No mother-in-law," Li commented sadly, and asked how women in the

West could manage without the live-in help most Chinese families take for granted. Her relationship with her own mother-in-law had a rocky start, marked by conflicts that had sometimes even led to violence. "But that's all in the past," she said. "We get along very well now." It's no wonder. Li is the family money tree, sometimes earning in a week what other farmers earn in a year. Thanks to her success, the family now lives in a two-storey house, complete with satellite dish. In the front room, a huge television sits beneath a shrine invoking the ancestors to bless the family with good luck, and the walls are covered in the school certificates of her three children—a triumph for a woman who managed only three years of school before being relegated to the family kitchen.

Li served a lunch of fried lotus flower, spicy chili salad and soup. We wolfed the food down while watching a Qing Dynasty-era soap opera on her television. "That was a very bad time," she said gravely, as the image of threadbare peasants fighting desperately to catch handfuls of grain filled the screen.

After the tour, you can unwind on a boat trip. The five-hour ride to the village of Yangdi weaves through some of the prettiest sections of the Li River, and craggy peaks with names like White Tiger Hill and Pen Holder Peak hug the river's edge. Fishermen on rafts made of tightly lashed bamboo skim across the water like gondoliers, ignored by the water buffalo grazing by the shore. Follow the river south for an hour and you reach Fuli, a small village of crumbling stone houses. Its main attraction is the twice-weekly market, which draws thousands of people. Here you can see the machinations of China's free-market ethic in full flight. Everything from toads to rat poison—and all the more conventional products in between—is flogged in an enormous market square the size of an aircraft hangar. The day I visited, there were giant tubs of catfish and eels, sacks stuffed with tobacco and men barbecuing pork trotters with a blow-torch. After an hour wandering around the market, I climbed on the bicycle I had brought by boat and cycled home to Yangshuo along quiet country roads.

FACT FILE



Visas: British passport holders need no visa to enter Hong Kong, but beyond that you need a Chinese visa, which is most easily obtained through the China Travel Service, 7 Upper St Martin's Lane, London WC2H 9DL (0171-336 3688). Allow a week for processing.

Getting there: Spring or autumn are the best times to visit if you want to avoid the heat of summer, when temperatures

can reach 40 degrees centigrade. There are no direct flights to Guilin from Britain. Specialist tours can be arranged through the China Travel Service (0171-336 9911). There are daily flights between Guilin and Peking (around £350 return) or you can take a hovercraft from Hong Kong to Wuzhou and, from there, get an overnight bus to Yangshuo, for under £50. The easiest way to get to Yangshuo, though, is by boat. River tours from Guilin cost 360 Yuan (£25) and take around

six hours. You can also get there by local bus for a very reasonable 5 Yuan (50p).

Where to stay: The Yangshuo Paradise Resort (00 86 773 882 2109) offers international-standard rooms starting at US\$100, but you should be able to save up to 50 per cent by booking through an agent. It's also worth checking out the private guest houses, many of which boast "luxury" rooms, with private bath, for a fraction of the price.

The great call of China

The collapse of the south-east Asian economy is bad news for Chinese tourism but means there are some great deals available for Westerners. By Neil Taylor

FOR THREE days towards the end of last year, the Shanghai Exhibition Centre exuded confidence and colour. It had become home to the first serious travel trade market held in China for more than 10 years. The tour operators, who came from all over the world, were faced with a choice of hundreds of local agents and tourist boards, each vying for business and eager to promote a specific town or province—the choice on offer was bewildering. No longer do you simply take a Yangtze cruise; 10 companies compete in schedules, standards and price. No longer are you grateful to get a seat on an aircraft; between Shanghai and Peking, for instance, there are now five competing airlines and flights every hour, with three classes on board most aircraft.

Clear marketing differences have emerged between the old tourist favourites such as Peking and Xian on the one hand and the lesser-known centres on the other. The former hope to keep visitors longer by publicising new attractions with their low admission fees and quiet locations. In Peking, for instance, tourists are encouraged to visit the house and garden of Song Qing-Ling, widow of Sun Yat-sen, and to look down on the Forbidden City from Coal Hill. In Shanghai, while it is still possible to see the site of the First National Congress of the Communist Party, tourists are now encouraged to visit the stock exchange in Pudong. Towns that Westerners traditionally ignore, such as Nanjing and Kunming, Guizhou and

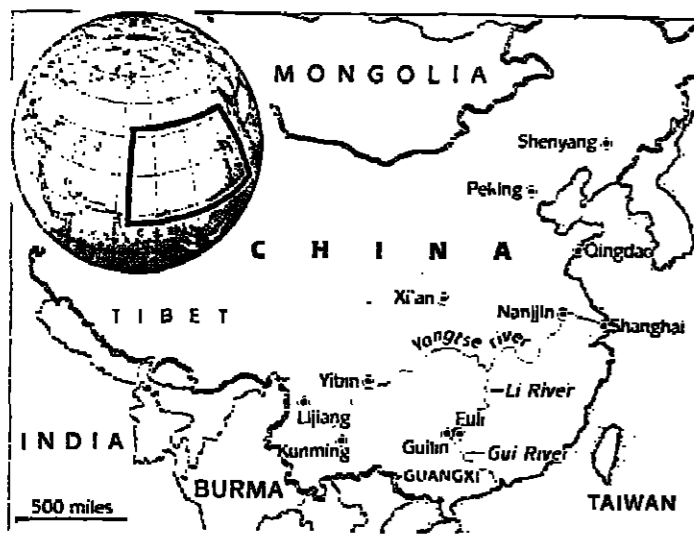


Yangtze cruises are offered by numerous companies

aware of this when they negotiated prices for their new brochures. The brashness of the Travel Market could not disguise the empty seats on aircraft into China, the overabundance of hotel rooms throughout the country and the enormous number of taxis always available. Many Western buyers hope to approach hoteliers during the spring following a bleak winter, both literally and metaphorically. They will then also have ammunition for renegotiating with their original partners. Similar tactics will be used with guides and transport companies.

For the prospective Western visitor, this scenario is ideal. I have just prepared a costing for a client who wanted to repeat a long individual itinerary last made in 1984. The price of £2,300 is identical but the differences are great. Flights will be in modern American aircraft and not in older Russian ones, drives will be along highways and not tracks, train journeys can be measured in hours rather than days and overnight stops will be in four-star hotels and not in poorly lit lodges. If most of 1999 will be tough for tourism in China, the People's Republic should be able to look forward to a happy 50th birthday in October. Visitors will appreciate the pageantry that is bound to accompany this great occasion, and so will come in large numbers. Some may even be willing to pay what the Chinese regard as normal hotel rates, for the privilege of being there then.

The writer is director of Regent Holidays (0117 921 1711)



TRAILS OF THE UNEXPECTED ...

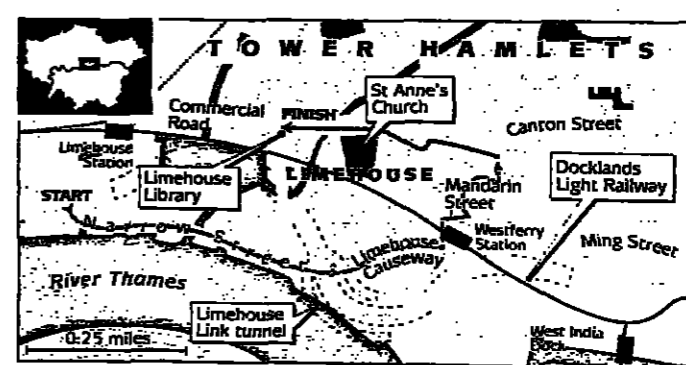
... through the Chinese quarter of London's docks

"There were opium dens, where one could buy oblivion, dens of horror where the memory of old sins could be destroyed by the madness of sins that were new." Not a bad description of Fleet Street, you might think, but in fact Oscar Wilde is illustrating an area of London three miles further east: Limehouse, on the north bank of the Thames.

A century ago, the capital's first Chinatown was established here among the vast warehouses, frenetic docks and decrepit dwellings. Much of it has been obliterated since then, by bombing and redevelopment, but the intrepid traveller in search of the Chinese connection will find much else of interest.

London's docklands began life exactly 200 years ago, when Parliament gave approval for the first modern dock, the West India, carving a great trench from the Isle of Dogs. As such, it attracted workers from the countries with which much of the trade was conducted. To 19th-century entrepreneurs, China appeared to be a source of unlimited cheap labour (it looks much the same to 21st-century investors). Many young Chinese were taken first to the mines of the Transvaal, where they laboured in what one historian described as "sinks of indescribable human beastliness".

In comparison, the Chinese sailors employed by the Blue Funnel Line were relatively lucky. They would spend their shore leave in Limehouse, close to the company's headquarters. The area is named after the lime kilns that processed Kentish chalk: "strange bottle-shaped kilns with their orange, fan-like tongues of fire," remarks Wilde.



To walk the streets where the seamen roamed, begin at the western end of Narrow Street (signposted from Limehouse station). Those possessed of an active imagination will be able to envisage when the thoroughfare lived up to its name, a conspiratorial huddle of warehouses. Nowadays, many have been demolished and replaced by "executive" housing, while those that remain have been so lavishly renovated that they give not a hint of "dens of horror". One notable relic is the Grapes, a 16th-century pub which appears as the Six Jolly Fellowship Porters in Dickens' novel *Our Mutual Friend*. Limehouse was once a hub of shipbuilding, an honour it shared with Deptford across the river. Sir Walter Raleigh sailed from here in 1596 in search of gold in the New World. Today, a piece of modern sculpture, Jane Ackroyd's *Herring Gull*, enlivens the bleakness of Ropemaker Fields.

This is part of the Thames Path National Trail, but the riverside character has been lost. An early 20th-century guidebook reports "little knots of Chinese seamen can always be observed, and the lodging-houses and eating-places bear signs of which few Britons know the meaning". Not these days.

Narrow Street leads on to the Limehouse Causeway, and soon crashing across all this history comes the Docklands Light Railway, a theme park ride masquerading as a piece of public transport. Diving under the DLR station at Westferry, you can follow Mandarin Street as far as the bus stop; adjacent, a skewed dragon commemorates the area's Chinese connections.

Cross the six lanes of the West India Dock Road and head along Birchfield Street past Amoy Place. Swing left on to the big, ugly Commercial Road, aka as the A13, venue for a couple of closed-down Chinese restaurants which yesterday were guarded by some older (non-Chinese) gentlemen quaffing an impressive amount of Tennant's Extra.

Soon you encounter Nicholas Hawksmoor's finest East End church, the magnificent St Anne's, and the handsome Limehouse Library, with a statue of Clement Attlee outside. "For the matter of 18d [7p] you are at the Chinese Empire in no time," remarked a historian about Limehouse; these days, you must invest £1.20 in a ride on the 15 bus to Soho to meet London's contemporary Chinese community.

SIMON CALDER



48 hours ... in Amsterdam

You need a break – and a shortcut to the soul of a great city. Ten years ago *The Independent* launched 48 hours, an idea often imitated but never equalled. Today, York Membury prescribes the perfect weekend break in Amsterdam



Rijksmuseum

Get your bearings

If you fly to Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport, get the train into the city centre. A word of warning: buy the €6.25 (€2) ticket first, otherwise, like me, you'll have to pay €21 (€5.50) to make the 20-minute journey (ouch!). The historic city centre, much of which dates from the 17th century, fans out from Centraal Station around a series of crescent-shaped canals. Since it is so compact, much of the city can be explored on foot – although it is worth investing in a strip card costing €11.50 which can be bought from the public transport office outside Centraal Station. Tread carefully, though: Amsterdam's canals bear down on you from nowhere, there appear to be more cyclists than pedestrians and, of course, everyone drives on the wrong side of the road.

0.25 mile

Light lunch

I chanced upon the delightful *Met Karbeel* (7) café-restaurant in Warmoesstraat, just a few minutes' walk from Centraal. It's in fact in the red-light district, right next to a sex shop. But don't let that put you off, for its mixed plate of meat and cheese, served for two at €18.50, is good value. That, topped off with a Dutch apple tart for dessert, should keep you going until you touch down in Blighty.

Beam down

British Airways (0345 222111) has a current special offer fare of £49 return, including tax, from London Gatwick or Heathrow to Amsterdam, but this must be booked before 17 February. The national Dutch carrier, KLM (0990 750900) flies from 21 UK airports, including London, Birmingham and Manchester. Current fares start at £109 return including tax, but the no-frills airline easyJet (0870 600 0000), has flights from Luton or Liverpool to Amsterdam from £70.50 return, also including tax.

Sunday morning: go to church

Few people go to Amsterdam to see its churches. But try to see *Westerkerk* (8) (West Church) in Westermarkt. It doesn't compare to Europe's great cathedrals, but it has two claims to fame: Rembrandt is buried beneath it (though nobody seems to know quite where) and it boasts the highest church tower in Amsterdam. If you're feeling energetic you can climb to the top when the church is open, a climb worth making for the spectacular view. If you're in the vicinity, try to visit the *Anne Frank House* (9) in Prinsengracht. Everyone knows the story – at least, they should do – of Anne Frank, the tragic Jewish girl who recorded her years in hiding during the German occupation in her famous diary. More than 50 years on, a visit still makes for a moving experience. Arrive early, though, for most tourists appear to make the pilgrimage.

Why go now?

Spring is approaching and this charming Dutch city is the perfect place to recharge your batteries over a long weekend. Furthermore, if you were waiting until April to pay a visit to Amsterdam's splendid Van Gogh Museum, you might as well go now, since the reopening of this museum has been postponed until 24 June. And, on 4 March, *Cirque du Soleil* stages its European première in the city (00 31 20 355 0355 for tickets, or use 0900 0106 when in Amsterdam).



Light district

A walk in the park

Open green spaces are at a premium in Amsterdam, as they are in so many Continental cities. So the English-style *Vondelpark* – named after the "Shakespeare of the Netherlands", Joost van den Vondel – is an asset, particularly in the summer, when it plays host to free concerts. With its trees and winding footpaths, it's the perfect place for a Sunday-morning stroll, whatever the season, and there's the attraction of the *Round Blue Tea-house* (6) serving coffee and pastries.

The icing on the cake

Amsterdam might boast fine museums and restaurants, but what makes it special is its unique character – its tree-lined canals, its trams and its cosy coffee-houses. The perfect way to round off a visit is by strolling through the *canalside flower market* (5) in Singel – surely the only market in the world in which wooden tulips look as good as the real thing.



Amsterdam's many canals

An aperitif

Why not forget about a traditional aperitif and experience the atmosphere of one of Amsterdam's legendary coffee-shops, where dope is sold legally over the counter and you can enjoy a coffee – or whatever else takes your fancy – in a haze of cannabis smoke? Two such coffee-shops are the *Global Village Chill-Out Lounge* (10), 51 Kerckstraat, and the *Greenhouse Effect* (11), 53/55 Warmoesstraat (00 31 20 623 7462). Alternatively, unwind at a trendy bar such as *Bar Bep* (12) or *Bar Diep* (13), both found in the virtually unpronounceable *Nieuwe Zijds Voorburgwal*.

Dinner

Tourists are usually urged to try one of Amsterdam's many Indonesian restaurants, but being in Holland, I felt it only right to sample the real local cuisine. If you also want to go Dutch, try the *Blauwe Hollander* (14), Leidsestraat 28 (00 31 20 623 3014). This dimly lit restaurant's menu revolves around nothing more exciting than meat and two veg, but it's inexpensive and the portions are big. You may have to share a table, but that's part of the fun and it's one of the best restaurants in what is otherwise a very touristy area.



Canalside houses



Canalside flower market

50 Tulpen
15,-

Check in

If you want to splash out, check in to the stately *Amstel Hotel* (2) (00 31 20 622 6060) which dominates a stretch of the *Amstel* river. This is where movie stars such as Brad Pitt stay when they are in town. Though with prices for a double room ranging from €875-€925 (€275-€290), you need him-star-deep pockets too. A good medium-priced hotel (costing about €235 (€73) per person per night) is *Nova* (3), *Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal* 276 (00 31 20 623 0966). The budget traveller could try *Prinsenhof* (4) *Prinsengracht* 810 (00 31 20 623 1721), where prices start at €125 (€39) a night.



Royal Palace

Lunch on the run

A popular lunch-time snack is the *falafel*, essentially a chick-pea kebab. You find falafel stores all over Amsterdam and they cost about the same as an ordinary kebab in Britain. Alternatively, gorge yourself on delicious Dutch-style chips, served with gloopy mayonnaise and costing around €5. Again, they're widely available, though I'd recommend the frittes (chips) stall in *Westermarkt* (5), about 10 minutes' walk from *Dam Square*.

Cultural afternoon

Visitors are always urged to see the *Rijksmuseum* (7) at *Stadhouderskade* 42 (00 31 20 674 7000). Designed in the 19th century, Holland's national museum (which bears a striking resemblance to *Centraal Station*) houses one of the finest sets of Dutch paintings anywhere, including works by Rembrandt (*The Night Watch*), Vermeer and Frans Hals. During the refurbishment of the nearby *Van Gogh Museum*, the building also provides a temporary home to some of that artist's paintings, among them the sunflowers and some self-portraits.

Window-shopping

A good place to start is *Kalverstraat* (3), a winding pedestrianised street which follows the old course of the *Amstel*. Once the site of a medieval cattle market, it is now home to chain stores such as *CEA* and countless other clothes shops. It's probably Amsterdam's nearest equivalent to London's *Oxford Street*, and on Saturdays it can be just as busy. More upmarket is the stylish *Magna Plaza* (15) once one of Europe's grandest post offices, but now converted into a luxurious shopping-centre dominated by upmarket fashion boutiques. The basement is occupied by a Virgin megastore.

GLOBAL AGENDA

Berlin

A perfect way to escape the biting February wind in Berlin (pictured) is to retire to a warm cinema and savour some of the choice celluloid offerings of the 49th *Berlin International Film Festival*. Although a less glitzy affair than Cannes or Venice, there's no doubting the quality and eclecticism of the programme: this year's retrospective will feature the complete works of Otto Preminger and the homage is devoted to Shirley MacLaine, while Berlin is the only mainstream film festival to have an awards ceremony dedicated solely to gay and lesbian film – the *Teddies*. *Running at various cinemas in Berlin* (00 49 3025 4890) to 21 Feb, DM12-DM18 per film.

Washington DC

Former members of London's *O'Jelly Carte Opera* company are staging *The Best of Gilbert and Sullivan*, a lighthearted show featuring melodies from some of the duo's most famous operas, including *The Mikado*, *The Pirates of Penzance* and *HMS Pinafore*. The singers – Deborah Clague, Patricia Leonard, John Ayldon, David Mackie and Geoffrey Shovelton – will also be airing pieces from some less well-known works.



such as *Ruddigore*, *The Sorcerer* and *Princess Ida*, as well as interspersing the music with anecdotes about performances in London, and stories about Gilbert and Sullivan and Richard D'Oyly Carte himself. *Baird Auditorium, National Museum of Natural History, Tenth & Constitution Avenue NW, Washington DC, USA* (00 1 202 357 3030) tomorrow 5pm and 7pm, \$21 per performance.

Madrid

You're always spoilt for choice for parties in Spain's capital, but some events have better locations than others and the beautiful *Bellas Artes* building takes some beating. The subtitle of *Esto se acaba...* (This is coming to an end...) reflects the fact that this year's *baile de máscaras* (masked ball) is the last of

this millennium, so you can be sure that the costumes, music and performances will be superb. *Círculo de Bellas Artes, 42 Calle Alcalá, Madrid* (00 34 91 360 5400) today 11pm-7am, Pts6,500.

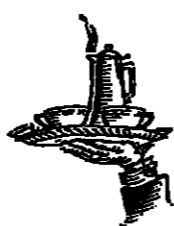
San Francisco

One of the largest museums in the Western world devoted exclusively to Asian art, San Francisco's *Asian Art Museum* is an apt venue for celebrating the Tibetan new year. A traditional festival will be led by the *Chakram-Pa Tibetan Dance and Opera Company*, which was formed in 1988 to preserve the traditional performing arts of Tibet. Alongside the singing and dancing, there will be a ceremonial offering to the gods, and activities such as the telling of folk tales, a treasure hunt and the making of prayer flags.

The audience – swelled, no doubt, by locals who attended *Beastie Boy* Adam Yauch's very successful Tibetan Freedom concert two years ago – will be encouraged to participate. *Gruhn Court, Asian Art Museum, Kennedy Drive, Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, USA* (00 1 415 379 8801) today, noon-3pm, \$4-7.

SHARON GETTINGS

24-HOUR ROOM SERVICE: ROYAL BATH, BOURNEMOUTH



can choose between the Carlton and the Royal Bath. The frontage of the latter is currently under wraps as it seeks to trump the offerings of the competition. But beyond the high-class scaffolding, how regal does one feel staying at the Royal Bath? Last weekend was unusual: the hotel was the venue for the annual Xerox finance division knees-up, and I have never seen so many Escort XR3s in one place before. But a contingent of young guns from Slough could not alter the fact that this is a Victorian venue in every sense. On Saturday afternoon, the faded-elegant lounge was replete with the requisite retired colonel. While the weather raged outside the huge south- (and sea-) facing windows, inside you could hear a monochrome drop.

Unlike some more, er, modern establishments, tradition runs deep. In public rooms such as the bar and the much-praised Oscar's restaurant, for example, there is a dress code – strictly no jeans after 7pm. The irony is that

for all its refined clientele, the Royal Bath is part of the Greenall's Brewery group. The Xerox boys demonstrated that they could, indeed, organise a party in a brewery-owned hotel.

ARE YOU LYING COMFORTABLY?

Beds: up to seven feet wide, with seven-inch deep mattresses by Mattison's of Ipswich. Non-smoking rooms? None. "We don't have specific non-smoking rooms," says the hotel. "We like to think our housekeeping is so good that we don't need it. We also have a special spray that eliminates tobacco odour."

The best key lets you into the ground floor Edward Suite, which has a private door to the extensive garden. The least favoured are "inland" rooms, overlooking Russell Cotes Road; you pay extra for either a sea-view or a town-view. Freebies: This Valentine's weekend, red roses and chocolates in every room; normally, fruit and flowers. Not freebies: You can buy a Royal Bath towelling robe for £27. Temperature: "We're Victorian," says the hotel, explaining that anyone who wants to be warmer or cooler will need to call Housekeeping. Bathroom: A piping-hot bath takes seven minutes to run, during which time you can



The lounge is so quiet you could hear a monochrome drop

survey the Bournemouth White Iris toiletries – including talc and bath salts as well as all the usual smelly stuff.

KEEPING IN TOUCH

Television and radio – both emerge through the TV, which has the five terrestrial channels plus a range of Sky stations and MTV. The radio selection is limited to BBC Radio 2, 3 and 4 plus the local 2CR station; none of that noisy Radio 1 pop music or 5 Live sport nonsense. Fax or Internet: Only if you bring your own laptop, and plug it into the ISDN socket if needed. Phone: A three-minute call at national peak rates costs £1.20. Switchboard: I called on three occasions at different times of

the day, and the average wait was only two seconds. On one call, I had to wait five seconds, and the telephonist apologised for the delay.

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

At the Bath Hill Roundabout, Bath Road, Bournemouth, Dorset BH1 2EW (01202 555555). Transport: Trains converge on Bournemouth from many parts of the country, but the station is way out of town. Time to an international airport: 15 minutes by cab to Bournemouth, but the only international destination is Dublin. Heathrow is a two-hour drive away. Time to Waterloo International: Five minutes by cab to the station, then 100 minutes on South West Trains.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Room rate: A double room, including English breakfast in bed, is £155. The Edward Suite costs exactly twice as much. I'm not paying that! Then sign up for a Leisure Break Sunday Night Special, where two people pay a total of £75 for dinner, bed and breakfast. Still too much? Check in to the YMCA across the road, and indulge in afternoon tea in the lounge for £9.25.

SIMON CALDER

MODERN MANNERS: YOUR CUT-OUT-AND-KEEP GUIDE TO SURVIVING THE MINEFIELD

Dear Serena

Dear Serena,
St Valentine's Day is merely another commercial occasion which we, as consumers, have allowed ourselves to be hypnotised into co-operating with. I refuse to be blackmailed into spending unnecessary money by large organisations, but none the less feel myself under pressure to do so. Can you suggest a means whereby I can make my partner understand that I love her without spending money?
Steve, Brighton

Two things, Steve: firstly, commercial organisations are very rarely able to sell us things we don't want unless it's via government without our knowledge. Valentine's gifts may be a ghastly commercial tat, but they are merely a commercial response to a very real human need for self-affirmation and/or intrigue. You would, therefore, be well advised to acknowledge these feelings. Secondly, you don't have to spend money, though you might have to sacrifice 10 minutes of your precious time by making a card with scissors,

glue, cardboard, tissue paper and other common household items and leave it somewhere where your partner will find it on the day in question. It is generally a good idea to make romantic or, at least, appreciative gestures within a relationship, as they can disappear altogether without nurture.

Dear Serena,
I love my partner very much, but he has a terrible tendency to meanness which he thinks he has disguised with a set of political stances about commercial exploitation and renewable resources. The endless recycling of string and the bits of wood clogging up the garden shed I can handle, but how can I persuade him to drop the pose and give me a Valentine's card this year?
Stella, Brighton

Tell him that refusing to participate in loaded emotional occasions, however commercialised, can be interpreted as a sign of spiritual meanness and that you would really appreciate receiving a card

as a sign of his affection. And just in case, spend the housekeeping money on a back-up card to send yourself; that way he will at least have paid for half of it.

Dear Serena,
Last year, I met a girl on the Internet who is everything a man could dream of: slim, blonde, small features, large breasts, loves sex (we have had some pretty steamy cyber-sessions, I can tell you!), is popular, works in the music industry, lives in a warehouse flat in the centre of town, is a cordon bleu cook, and single. We've had a relationship for some months now, and the



time has come to actually meet. The problem is this: I have been a little untruthful with my descriptions of myself, as I didn't think a woman like her would want to know me if she knew the truth. How do you think she will react when she turns up to meet a Mel Gibson lookalike with his own company and finds a 20-stone bald bloke who lives in a bedsit and works in a sandwich bar? Oh, and I told her my name was Gideon.

Barry, Ealing

But I would suggest that you both wear unmistakable identifying marks in your buttonholes so you have some chance of recognising each other. The name you might have to change by deed poll.

Dear Serena,
I have been to a couple of dinner parties recently where the women were expected to withdraw at the end of the meal. I don't think this is right in this day and age. Do you?
Lucy, Harrogate

This is a habit that has pretty much died out in the big cities, generally due to lack of space, but continues elsewhere. Personally, I don't mind it much, as it provides a change of scene when things might be getting dull, and the women, when you finally get to talk to them, often turn out to be a good deal more amusing than the pair of bores one has been trapped between all evening. Remember, also, that men don't actually stay behind to have interesting conversations about world affairs from which you will be excluded,

but to indulge in the important bonding ritual of going out into the garden and pissing on the lawn. Insist on staying if you must but be prepared to hoist up your skirts in a flowerbed and squat.

Dear Serena,
My cat is fond of chewing things, and is gradually reducing my wicker furniture to shreds. He pays no attention when I shout at him. What can I do to stop him?
Penny, Newquay

First of all, buy some wooden furniture. Wicker is ugly and collects dust, and cats have a refined sensibility when it comes to their surroundings. While you are saving up, you could try a dash of Tabasco rubbed over the parts he's most fond of chewing.

Knotty problems with the world today? Write to Dear Serena, 'The Independent', 18th Floor, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL, where they will be dealt with the customary sympathy.



ARIES

JUPITER, WITH all its abundant energy, optimism and goodwill, is moving into Aries - no wonder you've got that silly smile on your face. You are such a beacon of good sense and selfless help that clever enemies will soon tag you with a Mother Teresa mania, and accuse you of trying to start a crusade for converts. But you can easily levitate out of these situations, leaving confusion and anger far behind. But don't take any negative feelings with you - they don't go with your shoes.



TAURUS

YOU'VE NEVER been tactful (your diplomatic talents have been confined to not blowing your nose on the ambassador's tie), but here, in the middle of a conjunction between the Moon and Venus, you are suffused with sensitivity. You are at ease in the heights of culture - haute cuisine, couture, bourgeoisie. You are an excellent companion and shed lustre on those you partner. However, you will be more than aware of your new powers and will expect compensation (that's an error).



GEMINI

THERE IS a part of you that would quite like to be debased, and now is the time to dive in. A square aspect with Pluto (your relationship with the underworld and the outer world) can propel you into the depths and distances of passion. You may not know in what direction you are headed, but there is just no time to care. Trust to fate and eat red meat for breakfast. Even if you end up hitting the very bottom of the gutter, you will rise again, and the scars (bar one) will very quickly fade.



CANCER

YOU AREN'T getting enough exercise (and don't blame your partner). You need to feel your heart racing; routine is stifling your vital signs. What you see in the mirror isn't necessarily the permanent you. If you settle for what you have, you'll wake up suddenly and find that you're old. The essential sweetness you produce must be allowed out. Are you consuming enough garlic? That long-legged person will have to pass the garlic test, and so will you.



POPPY FOLLY

YOUR STARS: IT COULD HAPPEN

THE course we plot into the future is obscured by Time's mists, but it is cold, and there are probably icebergs out there. Mystics have warned us that St Valentine's Day may be approaching, so look out lovers, brace yourselves for a hail of automatic weapons fire and the sight of your partners clutching at their wounds as they gargle in slow motion to the garage floor.

It is not a good week, if the past is to be any guide. Tutankhamen's sarcophagus was opened, releasing the curse which was responsible for the building of the Millennium Dome. Inquisitorial Christians sentenced the Netherlands to death in 1568, and that equivocal Galileo was born ("It depends what the meaning of the word 'moves' is").

And you wouldn't want to have a birthday this week, because you would be sharing it with Banjo Paterson and Yoko Ono (who is sounding increasingly like a cat). There's also that swot, Alessandro Volta, who named

himself after a unit of electricity to please his teacher, as well as that old gloomy-boots, Thomas Malthus, who ignored the promise of fertiliser to say that we would all die of starvation.

Aquarians are great sexual democrats but are totally hopeless at arithmetic. Famous Belgian Georges Simenon's 10,000 conquests can only be verified by a quantum maths that has not been invented yet. Aquarians are irresistibly attractive to obsessives - their behaviour is familiar to addicts of all sorts - and their supremely original minds inspire them to triple themselves around their bedposts for the sake of their partners.

But there are also a small number of humanitarians in other fields born this week - three to be precise: John McEnroe, Barry Humphries and Matt Groening. But leaving them aside, the rest of it is a lot of actors and celebrity riff-raff who needn't concern us here. And that gonk, Prince Andrew.

Things, perforce, will be a bit better next week.



LEO

COURAGE IS the first virtue, the one that makes all other virtues possible. You are full of the primal stuff - that is why everyone around you is braced for impact. They are desperately trying to remember what they have done to you in the past and hoping you are not going to do it back to them. Please do not go back to worry the corpse of old grudges. You are so much better at dealing with the living than the dead (unlike Capricorn) and your friends really do need the transfusion.



VIRGO

YOU HAVE a busy week ahead: aspects of Mars, Pluto and Saturn operate on you without regard for your popularity ratings. Mars gives you mental capacity, especially with Saturn steadying a stray impulse towards recklessness (you decide to put your vest on after all). You feel capable of affecting public opinion. You are not usually that good in public so be careful. But at the week's end you'll say what you see whether or not anyone wants to hear.



LIBRA

YOU HAVE been very patient (well, very patient for you...). But if you wait too long, you might just lose the respect of your fast-moving colleagues (loyalty is all very well, but nobody likes pathological behaviour). You must recognise your nature, you are the least balanced sign of the zodiac. Messages from your subconscious are trying to get through. You get a sudden rush of the truth-and-beauty thing early on Thursday. Love is your only haven, but it isn't safe.



SCORPIO

YOUR APPALLING levels of energy are set to continue, and so is your unnerving ability to see things that grosser signs miss. But your patience wears thin and your unforgiving nature becomes dangerously apparent to your colleagues. Suspiciously multiply your brain is like a beehive, buzzing with paranoia (that is the wrong word; it's not paranoia). You can bend others to your point of view without breaking them - do so. It's cheaper.



SAGITTARIUS

THOSE WHO have doubted you must eat toxically humble pie. The energy you generate would qualify you for the national grid. Your growth principle is energised, spring has come early, you're ahead of the pack. But as the Great Souls of the East say: "First up, best dressed", and however spiritual your impulses, clothes are always more important. Make sure you evolve in the right direction. Unusually growth will have to be adjusted by costly surgery.



CAPRICORN

YOUR FORENSIC abilities (which need no encouragement) are dangerously aroused. Friends are not specimens to be examined on a pin. Nor can you express your passion in algebraic formulae - so stop thinking so much. Your analysis has far too much "anal" in it. But things do improve. Suddenly your hidden side emerges - patience, self-discipline, honesty; all that old-time stuff. This more than anything will deliver what you have been wanting.



AQUARIUS

WHEN PEOPLE say there's no need to get rattled, you can furiously contradict them and blame Uranus. Its lunar aspect leads to far too much originality; mood swings are wild, even in your terms. There is a weakness for lunacy in your make-up - it's not just normal irritability. You may decide to remodel your family life. Don't lose yourself in other peoples' points of view. Just because the mountain looks different from every different angle doesn't mean the mountain doesn't exist.

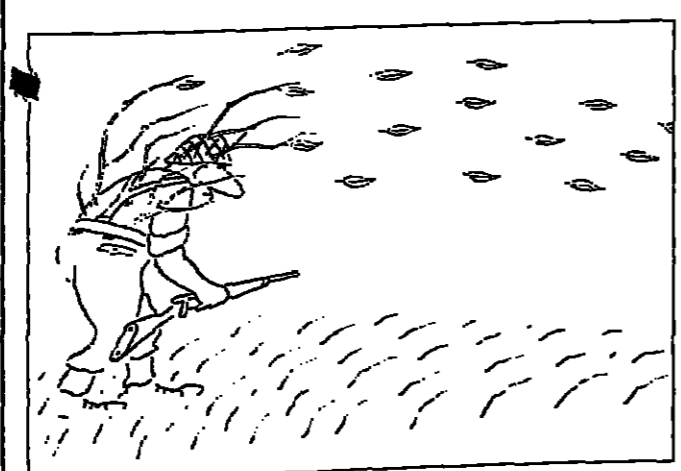


PISCES

YOUR SOCIAL life is affected by mist, friends become dim and distant, and their voices sound muffled. This is downtime for you. If you feel it's an illness, try cable therapy (you'll need a sofa and a satellite subscription). But remember solitude can be bad for your dress sense. A spiritual fright may unsettle your dreamy convictions. Don't be persuaded that the door to your secret garden has been nailed up. No, the real problem is finding it in the mist.

CLASSIC CARTOONS

MARTIN PLIMMER ON
JEAN-MAURICE BOSC



LARRY (TERENCE Parkes) has sent me two books by his favourite cartoonist, Jean-Maurice Bosc, a Frenchman who found fame in his own country and recognition abroad (Punch, Esquire etc). But committed suicide in 1965, at the age of 41. Larry first saw Bosc's work in The Guardian Educational Supplement in the 1950s, while working as an art teacher. "He influenced me more than anything," he says. "I still find him the greatest." Like many new cartoonists of the time, Larry was struck by Bosc's captionless economy

A DIFFICULT week. My chest condition was improving. The cortisone at last took effect. I had struggled boyfully through two Puzzle Panels and saved the world from my understudy. Let it not be said I have no social conscience. Cortisone makes you balloon out like Oprah Winfrey. It also hinders the critical faculties. To get the best out of a guest, you need to be able to monitor what they say.

Parkinson recently said that the reason his chat show is the best is because he listens. (Hear! Hear!) And here was I with a dud antenna. Consultation with Donald Lane at the Churchill Chest Clinic confirms it. This country's two top experts on my condition agree on strategy: Donald Lane - the country's leading asthmologist - and me, the country's leading asthmatic. Keep taking the tablets. Soldier on. But it's a relief to joke with someone who understands my daily and private struggle to breathe. It helps to quell the inner and unbidden lament of "Why me?". Above all it stops me feeling sorry for myself.

On with the money, then. I arrive at St Catherine's College, Oxford as a guest at a celebratory dinner to make Noam Chomsky an honorary fellow. I was looking forward to asking the Grand Old Man how he felt about the track "I am Noam Chomsky" on 70 Gwen Party's Anti-Blue Nazi album. I



would quiz him on American policy towards Iraq. But a metaphorical bombshell blew me off course.

My second father (I always carry a spare) came up ashen-faced and told me Iris Murdoch had just died. Iris had been important in my life. At critical moments she had hovered in the background like the fairy godmother I never had.

It was she that had discovered unimagined talents in me. It was she that had realised I was a puzzlist of a rare order. The announcement left me numb. My father, who had been close to Iris and John most of his life, also seemed to be in shock. It often helps if someone else wobbles. It's as if there are only a limited number of wobbly hats to go round.

I was reminded of how Auden in his poem 'La Muse des Beaux Arts' describes a Bruegel landscape in which peasants go about their earthy - and no doubt clichéd - business, oblivious to Icarus's tragic plunge earthwards. There was no time to feel about any of this. The advice of Dr Baxter, my neuropsychologist, is difficult. The show must go on. I hammer out a script. The next day Harry throws most of it out. What remains is a good script. Inside I still feel hollow. At tea with the guests, I make an extra effort to be affable. I laugh at jokes which seemed better told the first time I heard them. But at heart I feel a gnawing depression and a hollowiness unassailable by hugs. To my horror, this Vesti la Giubilation starts to work. I enjoy myself. I twinkle. My guests relax. They tip their pearls of wisdom freely on to the dark cloth. I have spread before them. Good programme, says Harry afterwards.

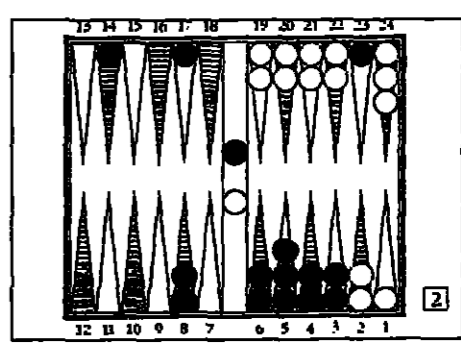
Driving back that night under real stars, at about Stokenchurch, where the M40 opens up into what looks like the Promised Land but is only the Thames Valley, I suddenly feel wobbly. I pull over and find a hard shoulder to cry on.

But that's OK now. The show has gone on.

'Puzzle Panel', BBC Radio 4, Fridays at 1.30pm. Comments to indy@puzzlemaster.co.uk

BACKGAMMON

CHRIS BRAY



ONE OF the great advantages computers have over humans (at least when playing backgammon!) is a complete lack of emotion. The best human players can turn off their emotions and concentrate purely on the game. Computers don't remember that in the previous game they lost an outrageous gammon, nor does that loss affect their future play.

The position above is a good example. No good computer program would forget to redouble here. Despite the fact that black is on the bar against a five-point board, his position is strong. If he enters with a 2, or white enters next roll with a number that crashes his home

board, then black's position becomes so strong that white must drop the redouble.

Most good players would analyse this correctly as a double and a drop. Over the board though, that funny old thing called emotion comes in to play. "What if I stay on the bar, then white enters with a 16?" thinks black. "I'll give it one more roll for safety." He does just that, and next roll finds white dropping his redouble. Instead of winning a possible 8 points (if white mistakenly takes) he has won 2. Emotion has clouded the decision-making process. Save the emotions for St Valentine's Day: they have no place at the backgammon board.

dog world of Hirseltown as a young hopeful sets out to pursue a career in the movies. With Shari Mann, David F. Friedman (66294578). 4.45 Close.

Channel 5

YOUR MONEY

HOW TO MAKE IT • HOW TO SPEND IT

Foodie heaven:
the best gadgets
for your kitchen

SHOPPING, PAGE 11

The BMW
that thinks
it's an E-type

MOTURING, PAGE 12

Dream homes:
how to buy
the Castle

PROPERTY, PAGE 13

Direct way to your account

Many use direct debits to pay their bills – but they're not always an easy option. By Paul Slade

Fancy having your bank account picked every few months? Millions of people are perfectly happy for it to happen to them. The "pickers" include most of Britain's biggest retailers, councils and utility suppliers. The method they choose is the direct debit.

Direct debits are an increasingly popular way to pay off a huge variety of bills. They involve giving an organisation with which you have a financial relationship the right to withdraw sum of money from your account. Unlike a standing order, which allows only for the withdrawal of a set amount from your bank account, a direct debit can vary month by month to match a changing bill, subject to prior notice being given of any change in how much is being debited.

For companies such as gas or electricity suppliers, the cheapest and most reliable way to collect money from their customers is via direct debit. Often, they will give discounts to customers who are prepared to use this method, as 31 million people in Britain now do. But the number of complaints to the Banking Ombudsman about direct debits have almost doubled in the past two years, and the banks are not always keen to honour their promises of a prompt refund when problems arise.

Chris Eadie, the deputy Banking Ombudsman, says that his organisation received 568 complaints regarding direct debits and standing orders in the year to September 1998, against an 232 in 1995/96. His guess is that about half of these come from direct debit users.

The banks have pledged to give customers a no-quibble refund if they let companies take too much money from their accounts, or take their payments too early. Asked whether they honour this pledge in practice, Eadie says: "They do when we come on the scene and remind them about it. We pack a little more punch than the customer on his own."

Complaints about direct debits fall into two categories. The first, involving withdrawals which are too large or taken too early, can be put right with a simple refund.

More serious are the complaints which arise from times when a direct debit which the bank has wrongly stopped. This could lead to, say, an insurance policy being cancelled – with



Pay the easy way – but be prepared for the potential pitfalls

all the potential hazards that implies. In cases like this, the Ombudsman sets any compensation he awards against the bank to reflect the policyholder's true loss and any inconvenience the customer has suffered.

Mr Eadie says: "Banks agree, as one of the conditions of joining the Ombudsman scheme, that they will

honour the recommendations made by this office. For all practical purposes, a bank has to pay up whatever we recommend as compensation."

Some of the biggest discounts on offer from major utility companies arise in the newly-competitive gas market. Eastern Electricity, for example, offers gas customers a 7 per

cent discount for switching to direct debits, while British Gas gives its own gas customers 6 per cent.

British Gas spokesman Richard Dymond says: "For companies like ours, direct debit is the cheapest way we can collect the money that's owed us by our customers, and that's why we're able to pass on these savings. With the

SUPPLIER	SERVICE	SAVING AS % OF AVERAGE BILL
British Gas	Gas	6%
British Gas	Electricity	4%
BT (all)	Line rental	4%
Eastern Electricity	Electricity	5%
Eastern Electricity	Gas	7%
Southern Electric	Electricity	2%
Southern Electric	Gas	6%

(All Electricity Direct Debit. No discounts given on cost of calls. Discounts on Direct Debit payments compared to quarterly cheque payments from the supplier using regular direct debit. For domestic residential customers of same supplier. Based on monthly Direct Debit and average bill.

number of direct debits going through the system, there can always be the odd glitch, but problems are few and far between."

As our table shows, electricity suppliers also offer savings for direct debit customers. For some reason, though, water companies seem reluctant to do this. Neither Thames Water nor Severn Trent – identified by Ofwat as the UK's two biggest suppliers – give any discount at all. BT offers a small discount on line rental, but none on the cost of calls.

Some bank customers prefer to rely on standing orders, as they feel this gives them greater control. But standing orders too have their perils.

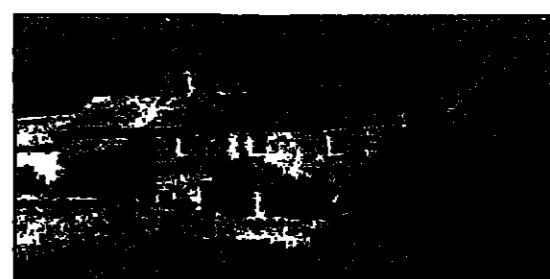
One such problem arises with mortgage repayments. Halifax spokeswoman Alison Kellington says: "Every time the mortgage rate changes, you have to change the standing order with your bank. That's where people sometimes slip up – they forget to change the standing order when the amount of the repayment goes up, and then they're not paying enough."

Whether you use standing orders or direct debits, one danger you face is that the withdrawals force your account into the red without an authorised overdraft. If this happens, your bank will almost certainly charge you for it.

Barclays, for example, charges customers £20 a month if they go more than £20 overdrawn for more than three working days, without gaining the bank's agreement. Arranging a direct debit in the first place, however, is generally free.

Banking Ombudsman: 0171-404 9944

BARGAIN HUNTER



Property of the week

Farm from the madding crowd
IT NEEDS re-roofing, a new damp-proof course, windows, kitchen and bathrooms and central heating. Bloomer Hill Farm, once part of the Skipton Castle Estate on the south-facing slope of the Aire Valley in Yorkshire, has been a hard-working Dales farm with little time for life's luxuries, despite its glorious setting.

Part of it was once a nail maker's workshop – the name Bloomer comes from the iron industry – and you can still see the remains of an old beehive oven. The farmhouse – dating in part from the mid-16th century – has a 24ft pantry with the original bacon-salting slabs and ham hooks and three acres of land. But it will take around £50,000 of work to bring it into the 21st century. There is also a stone barn with planning consent for conversion into houses and a further five and a half acres of land. The guide price for the farmhouse is £175,000 and £155,000 for the barn. Details from Simon Thornton on 01943 816213.

ROSALIND RUSSELL

Car of the week

The ultimate Cosworth
FORD IS set to launch a high-performance Cosworth-badged version of the Focus, the car of the year. It should be impressive, but it has a hard act to follow in the shape of the hand-built Escort RS Cosworth.

Just 7,143 were delivered between 1992 and 1995. The last batch had a smaller, more responsive turbo that delivered supercar performance of 140mph and 60mph in less than six seconds.

Cosworth specialist Automotive Unlimited (01279 8160490) in Essex has perhaps the finest example in captivity, with an astonishingly low 3,800 miles on the clock. Finished in an attractive light blue and with a comprehensive specification, including leather interior and air conditioning, the asking price of £25,995 is very competitive. Collectors will curse if they miss out.

JAMES RUPPERT

Deal of the week

Switch on to Equitable's ISA
WE ALL like to receive something for nothing. So here's one special offer.

Equitable Life will be launching its new Individual Savings Account (ISA) on 6 April. The account, offered through its unit trust subsidiary, is a fund which tracks the UK All-Share Index. Normally, such accounts levy an annual charge of up to 1 per cent, but Equitable says you can hold your money free for a year. It will then charge 1 per cent. This is cheap, but not brilliant. Legal & General charges 0.5 per cent in annual fees. The answer is to invest with Equitable Life in year one and then switch to Legal & General. Call 0171-606 6611.

NIC CICUTTI

Broker funds run for benefit of managers, not clients

The financial regulator has uncovered a record of years of dire performance by various broker funds, writes Andrew Verity

INVESTORS WHO allow independent financial advisers to manage up to £1bn of their savings in so-called broker funds are suffering very poor investment performance, City regulators warned this week. Around 100,000 people invest in broker funds, run by independent financial advisers rather than life insurers or investment managers.

In the past, advisers have argued that their detailed knowledge of clients, and the ability to tailor an investment fund to meet their specific needs, offered the potential for outperformance when compared to funds managed by large investment management houses.

However, in its first published survey on the issue, the Personal Investment Authority (PIA) has found damning evidence of bad value for money in the funds. On average, they returned over 50 per cent less than funds run by dedicated managers.

David Peffer, chief executive of the PIA, says: "Existing investors should watch performance carefully and ask themselves if they are getting value for the extra charges."

Mr Peffer's comments follow mounting concerns about this neglected investment area. Financial advisers typically levy their own fee on top of that normally charged by the life insurer, doubling the

level of charges. Total charges usually run to about 2.5 or even 3 per cent a year. This means that, assuming inflation of 2.5 per cent, a fund needs to grow by up to 6 per cent for its value just to stand still.

The PIA's survey reveals that savings invested in broker funds returned an average of 2.5 per cent a year over the last five years – compared to 4.6 per cent for dedicated fund managers. Investors who put their pension money in broker funds also fared poorly. Broker funds returned an average of 4 per cent a year, against 8.2 per cent for dedicated managers.

The PIA has launched a renewed

crack-down on the funds. Advisers whose funds underperform will be required to write to clients explaining why their money should remain invested in this way.

The crackdown is the second recent initiative by the PIA after years of complaints that, in many cases, the funds appeared to be run in the interests of independent financial advisers (IFAs), rather than clients.

In early 1997, the PIA insisted brokers running the funds should be properly qualified and began to insist they have the Investment Management Certificate, a formal qualification. Since then, hundreds of funds have been withdrawn from

the market. The amount of money invested in the funds has shrunk from £2bn to £1bn, while the number of funds has dropped from 1,300 to 500. The average amount invested is £2m per fund.

Richard Cockcroft, policy adviser at the PIA, says: "There is no excuse now for those firms who are managing funds not to have an investment management certificate. The broker fund market is likely to shrink because of two reasons: the qualifications, and the general perception that these are not always advisable – to put it mildly."

The funds also create a conflict of interest for financial advisers

which can potentially compromise their independence. If they persuade clients to join the funds, they enjoy a stream of income which is not available when they recommend a cheaper fund run directly by an investment house.

While IFAs charge for "running" broker funds, they rarely pick the individual stocks in which the money is invested. Instead, they simply invest in a selection of funds from those on offer at an investment house or life insurer. Companies providing selections of funds include Capel Cure Sharp, the private client investment manager, and Standard Life, the Swedish-owned life office.

Networks of IFAs, such as Countrywide, also offer funds.

Regulators are careful to stress that the performance figures are only averages – some companies performed better. But performance in particular areas has been dire.

Brokers offering "adventurous" funds for life insurance savings – designed for high risk and high reward – made an average of just 0.8 per cent a year over the last five years, much less than the "cautious" version. Their professionally-run counterparts returned 6 per cent. Broker funds for offshore life savings did particularly badly, on average shrinking by 0.2 per cent a year.

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PERSONAL FINANCE

Critical choices ahead

FINANCIAL MAKEOVER

NAME: MELINDA PHILLIPS AGE: 50 OCCUPATION: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF A NATIONAL CHARITY

NIC
CICUTTI

The PIA's crackdown
on broker fund fees is
beginning to look
weak to say the least

THE GENERALLY unreported problem of broker funds hit the headlines this week, as we report on our front page. Many tens of thousands of savers have upwards of £1bn in these funds. In many cases the bonds' performances are abysmal. Yet the advisers and the fund managers administering the individual parcels of money all walk off with large management fees.

Now we hear talk of the Personal Investment Authority (the PIA), the financial regulator, cracking down on these funds.

The problem with such talk is that we've heard it all before. Back in 1997, the PIA released a report showing that broker funds had, on average, underperformed against their indexes in the previous six years.

"A general observation can be made that on average the underperformance against the index is approximately equal to additional management fees withdrawn from the funds, but that a number of funds have at least matched their chosen index," the PIA noted dryly, even then.

The PIA report in 1997 found that broker funds provided 25 per cent or more of the annual income for almost 20 per cent of IFAs that offered them.

Two years later, faced with evidence that this underperformance continues and that £1bn still remains - in most cases, wrongly - invested in broker funds, the PIA's self-styled "crackdown" begins to look weak, to say the least.

It might have been easier to rule that unless a broker fund manager can either show out-performance against a relevant index, or obtains a mandate from all clients specifying that their money should remain in one, all funds should be closed down within six months. But that's far too easy.

IF YOU are one of the many tens of thousands who have called Standard Life Bank to inquire about one of its mortgages, you might be interested to know that the company is currently acquiring borrowers at the

rate of knots. The advantage of these "flexible" mortgages is that because most are set at a variable rate, without compulsory insurances and so on, it is simple to work out exactly how much they cost relative to the competition.

Strange then, that with the letters confirming that it is prepared to grant you a mortgage, Standard Life Bank is sending out comparison tables. These show it is 0.25 per cent cheaper than Legal & General Bank, which offers a near-identical loan. The comparison dates back to 6 January, which is the day before L&G also cut its rate to match Standard Life.

Obviously there was no attempt by Standard Life to mislead borrowers, and this was pure coincidence. Of course it was.

THE LAST time I was about to incur bank charges (through a oversight on my part), I phoned up my assistant bank manager and successfully pleaded for them to be waived.

Then I succumbed to the notion of convenience and switched to telephone banking instead. This week I received a letter from my new bank telling me that, because I was over my agreed overdraft limit for about three days last month, I would have to pay a one-off charge of £35.

A very nice woman at the other end of the phone was completely inflexible on the matter. Which is fair enough, I suppose. Rules are rules - although it makes me yearn for my old assistant bank manager.

MELINDA IS at a critical stage in her life. She is at an age when retirement planning issues would normally begin to acquire added importance. She also has two young children, Joshua, 11, and Rhiannon, aged 13, who will both need financing through higher education in a few years' time, at the same time.

As chief executive of a national charity, Melinda is a member of a final-salary pension scheme. She also makes extra payments into a company top-up scheme. In addition, she has a previous employers' money-purchase pension pot, plus the remnants of a personal plan into which National Insurance rebates have been held.

In addition to her pension planning needs, and that of funding her children's college education, Melinda is also considering a new mortgage on her property in order to reduce monthly outgoings and help fund her niece's education. Among the other options she is considering in order to do this, are the possibility of cashing in part or all of a portfolio of PEPs, built up since 1993/94. In addition to these investments, Melinda also has a variety of building society accounts worth more than £60,000.

Melinda has a £40,000 part-repayment and part endowment-backed mortgage with Cheltenham & Gloucester, at a variable rate of 8.2 per cent. She also contributes towards a separate mortgage on behalf of her mother.

The adviser: Philippa Gee, managing director, Gee & Company, fee-based independent financial advisers based in Shrewsbury (01743 236982).

The advice: The first concern is your mortgage. At the very least, you should negotiate with your own lender to take advantage of a more competitive rate to reduce monthly outgoings. Given the sizeable funds held in cash, suffering from lower interest rates, I would instead suggest that the mortgage should be repaid immediately.

The endowment policy set up for 50 per cent of the loan should continue and the capital produced at maturity, tax free, could be used for additional retirement income. The result of this repayment will be around £340 released each month.



Melinda Phillips wants to plan for the further education of her children, Josh and Rhiannon

Neville Elder

There remains the mortgage, on your mother's home. While you could repay the borrowings in full now I would advise against this, as it will significantly deplete your assets.

I have spoken to the lender concerned, who would be willing to change your mother's mortgage to a discounted or capped rate to reduce costs. They would also allow you to then alter the capital repayment portion of the mortgage to take advantage of an "interest-only concession", where payments will consist of only the interest element and the capital borrowed is eventually repaid from the estate. This would reduce your monthly outgoings by up to a further £100.

Turning to your existing investments, we need to retain a cash sum for you as a float to cover one-off expenses and financial "emergencies" and £10,000 should suffice. Excluding the Tessa you re-invested last year, there are more than five dif-

ferent savings accounts and I would suggest that we scale these down to just one, the SAGA account.

This leaves a lump sum of £10,000 to invest now for the children's education, along with the monthly amount of £400 released by the mortgage changes proposed. Assuming a total of £4,000 a year is required per child for four years, increasing by 3 per cent, we estimate a total of £40,000 could be required between 2004 and 2008.

Providing the Tessa and PEPs continue to provide you with competitive returns, these should cover the costs highlighted above.

You are concerned about the effect of current stockmarket volatility on these PEPs and wonder whether to sell now to secure profits achieved to date. While I appreciate your apprehension, the funds are not required for at least five years, and with the tax advantages a PEP can provide, these should be maintained.

It would be right to build up a more balanced portfolio with further investments, and in particular the fixed interest sector. You have already expressed an interest in corporate bonds - you should not be swayed by the media attention given to this type of investment, but a holding of up to 65,000 to make use of your general PEP allowance could be appropriate. This would leave £4,000 to invest elsewhere.

You plan to retire between 60 and 65, and have various pension arrangements in place, as well as the endowment proceeds, which we have suggested you no longer use for the mortgage. The next stage is to request an up-to-date assessment of what you might receive from each pension source at retirement and obtain a state pension forecast from the DSS (simply by completing a short form known as BR19). Based on those details you could then consider increasing the amount invested into

your additional voluntary contributions (AVC) scheme.

I would suggest no more than up to half of the monthly sum saved on your mortgage. For the remaining monthly amount, a standing order should be set up now to boost your cash "float" and discipline you into these regular savings. In April this year, you should start an ISA with a mixture of an initial £4,000 capital sum and then monthly amounts to top it up to the maximum of £7,000 in the first year and £5,000 thereafter.

The value of your property means that there will be an inheritance tax liability on your death. The inclusion of your niece within the arrangements of your estate is not an issue you have considered yet. I would urge you to take account of this.

Finally, although your employer provides significant income protection and other health benefits, you need to protect your earnings ability as much as possible.

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head



In every market - street or financial - one man's junk is another man's goldmine

Down the junkyard

Are junk bonds a good investment or a load of rubbish, asks Teresa Hunter

Falling interest rates may raise a cheer from Britain's nine million homebuyers, but they can cause real hardship for the country's savers, particularly those trying to live off the income from their nest eggs.

Interest from bank and building society accounts will tumble from the beginning of next month to around 4.5 per cent gross, 3.5 per cent net of tax, following the latest cut in the cost of borrowing. At these levels, even a fairly substantial pot of 100,000 pounds will only produce £300 monthly income.

Returns from Government bonds also slid sharply from 6.3 per cent last year to 4.5 per cent, and are expected to continue to decline further as our interest rates converge with those in Europe, where bank rates are 3 per cent.

Which explains why a new breed of high income funds which are flooding on to the market are proving popular with investors determined to narrow the income gap.

Their advocates believe junk bond funds represent one of the best investment opportunities currently available. Their critics argue that novice savers are being persuaded to risk their shirts on junk which may never be able to meet its obligations.

How safe is investing in bonds? Usually, as safe as it gets. Most bond funds invest in fixed interest stocks, which guarantee an income until maturity. When issued by governments in their own currency, there is virtually no risk of default, because they simply print currency to meet their obligations.

These bonds, called gilts because they are considered a "gilt-edged" investment, are currently yielding about 4.5 per cent. But a word of warning. It is not unknown even for sovereign states to run into difficulties. Russia and Indonesia have recently struggled with foreign debt repayments.

So only bonds issued by governments are safe? Not entirely. A number of blue chip com-

panies also issue bonds, which are not as safe as gilts, but are the next best thing. They typically yield 1 or 1.5 per cent more than gilts, and took off with the launch of corporate bond personal equity plans in 1993.

The likelihood of these companies defaulting is thought to be very slim, but the risk is assessed by credit rating agencies, like Moody's and Standard & Poor's. The safest corporate bonds get a triple A or double A gold star rating.

So what's the big risk? These high yielding funds aren't investing in the triple A rated bonds. So-called "junk" corporate bonds promise a return of 7.5 per cent or 8 per cent by buying bonds of companies with much poorer ratings, which means they also have a more pronounced default risk.

Anyone who needs to pay 3 per cent above the going rate of interest doesn't look like the best bet in town.

So they're too risky to touch? Not necessarily, as long as you understand precisely what you are investing in. Although new to the UK scene, the junk bond market has thrived in the US for some time. Very respectable companies issue these bonds. There are currently a flurry from telecom firms like Orange or Colt Telecom, who are too new to have earned higher ratings.

How often do junk bonds default? Surprisingly little, but when they do it can be spectacular. Mismanagement of junk bonds was at the root of the "savings and loans" scandal in the US, where an entire financial sector was all but wiped out in the early Nineties. More recently in the UK we have seen Barings Brothers and Queen Moat default, although debts were restructured and some payments made.

So what's the best advice? As always, if you can afford to take a risk, buy a little bit of everything. If you can't, stick with the traditional gilt and triple A corporate bond funds.

M&G's Theodora Zemek believes that investors are over-compensated for the risk the bonds will default, which he puts at 3 per cent. Furthermore he claims that the credit rating agencies are not necessarily a good guide to a company's credit-worthiness.

She argues: "American studies have shown that there is a low degree of correlation between credit ratings and the likelihood of default. They are useless when it comes to predicting so called 'event risk'."

She believes the best deals are with companies who are likely to be upgraded during the life of the bond, and these are the investments she actively seeks out. That way you buy into a high yield, with a company which is a much lower risk than implied by the yield.

Does anyone agree with her? Yes. Scottish Widows, Fidelity, Framlington, Perpetual and Schroder have all launched high yielding corporate funds which mix gilts, triple A rated bonds and junk bonds.

What do the critics say? They have three main criticisms. Firstly they maintain that investors do not understand the risk they are taking when they buy these funds, and think they are as completely safe as other bonds.

Second, they warn that higher than

normal charges on a bond fund, also puts the capital at risk. Finally, the jerebians predict a sharp rise in the rate at which these bonds default if the world economy stumbles into a recession.

Murray Johnson's Chris McGinty is convinced that any promise of a yield of above 6.5 per cent in the UK, and above 5.5 per cent in Europe, must put your capital at risk. He says: "The real concern is investors looking for income who buy 'off the page'. They are more likely to buy a high headline rate without understanding the risks."

He is also concerned that a flood of new funds chasing a limited amount of stock, will push up prices in the short term, which could well crash later.

BEST PEP, the London-based independent financial advice firm, also warns about the risks, but concludes that, on balance, there are attractions for investors desperate for income, provided they understand the pitfalls.

Jason Holland, a director at BEST PEP explains: "There is a much greater risk of capital loss than with a conventional corporate bond fund, especially if charges are taken from the capital. If the current economic slowdown moves into a steep recession there is a likelihood of an increase in the default rate on less creditworthy corporate debt."

And even Perpetual's Paul Causser admits that there is a greater risk of default with a junk bond than with the share of a blue chip company.

JUNK BONDS OR HIGH INCOME FUNDS?		
FUND NAME	ESTIMATED YIELD	CHARGES
Fidelity Extra Income	7.5% Gross (after charges) paid monthly	3.25% Initial 1.25% Annual (taken from income)
Framlington European Bond	8% gross (after charges) paid monthly	3.75% Initial 1% Annual (taken from the capital)
M&G High Yield Corp. Bond	8% gross (after charges) paid monthly	Nil Initial 1.25% Annual (taken from income) Exit charges decreasing over five years from 4.5 down to 1%
Perpetual Monthly Income Plus	8.5% gross (after charges) paid monthly	3.15% Initial 1.25% (taken from the capital)
Schroder High Yield Bond	7% gross (after charges) paid quarterly	3.25% Initial 1.25% Annual (taken from the capital)
Scottish Widows Extra Income & Growth PEP	8% gross (after charges) paid monthly	None

BT enters the fight to make you free

It looks as though Internet service providers will have to drop their fees - or pay the price

SO ARE YOU still paying for your Internet access? How quaint! The virtual world runs on a different clock to the real world and it seems that the business model of the Internet Service Provider (ISP) is mutating again. British Telecom has decided to join in, this week launching BT Clickfree, its own free access service.

And Tesco is offering its 10 million Clubcard holders free Internet access as well. In the face of competition like this, it is going to be difficult for any of the approximately 300 ISPs in the UK to continue to charge you a monthly fee to access the Internet. So how do they make their money? Through a fraction of the money you spend on your telephone bill while hooked up, and through advertising, of course.

FOR THOSE of us who do not fancy boiling a kettle while mountains of graphic-heavy banners and animations we do not actually want to look at download themselves, there is an answer. Webwasher washes your browser page whiter-than-white!

Siemens has made its WebWasher tool available to all Internet users as a freeware program. Business users are asked for a nominal licence payment, but the program is free to private users. It is

INTERNET INVESTOR
ROBIN AMLÖT

a filter which supplements your Internet browser, and allows you to screen out material of no interest. Alan Norman, marketing director at Siemens Computer Systems, commented: "WebWasher enables everyone to use the Internet more efficiently, without hindering the variety of information available. Users can choose which contents they wish to view and are not compelled to pay transmission fees for unwanted material."

ONE OF the newer personal finance websites, MoneyExtra, says it has attracted over 20,000 registered users in 8 weeks. MoneyExtra claims this makes it one of the most successful launches of a personal finance site in the

UK. Since launching in December, nearly 6,000 users have accessed the MoneyExtra service to obtain comparative mortgage rates and product details and nearly 4,000 have run a search for the best deposit account.

SOMETHING of a milestone has also been passed by Charles Schwab Europe. The stockbroker's Internet trading service handled more than £100m in trades in the latter half of last year, following the launch in June of its "second generation" online dealing service. That figure is allowing the brokerage to boast pole position in the entire UK e-commerce market.

THE LATEST study by Internet analysts Fletcher Research shows that the sale of computer goods turned over £168m in the whole of 1998. The next largest e-commerce markets were airline tickets (£24m), books (£15m) and music (£8m).

WebWasher: www.siemens.de/servers/w/wash/wash_us.htm
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LAST WEEK saw me take my first trip to Austria. The object was to learn to ski - also a first. The good news is that I returned in one piece.

The even better news is that I had no trouble in dealing with the Austrian currency. There are 20 Austrian schillings to the pound. I seem to recall that, until 28 years ago, the same measure applied to our own currency.

Interestingly one of my travelling companions told me that 20 schillings has been the exchange rate for a considerable length of time. There has to be a moral there somewhere.

Travelling around the ski resorts of southern Austria I was struck by the fact that only one restaurant I came across offered the option for settling the bill in euros.

Since no establishment appeared to accept credit cards, I have not had the chance to discover the effect of being billed in the new European currency for services purchased in the EU. Still, it was an interesting venture into an alternative culture and one which at my age and build is unlikely to be repeated in a hurry.

It was amazing how much had changed during the brief period I was away. The Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee lowered interest rates by 50 basis points, while the FTSE index seemed to do nothing but go South. It is only in the last day or so that share prices here in the UK have steadied.

We seem to have a classic conflict here and in the US between the weight of money seeking investment opportunities, and the increasing nervousness of professional managers over the valuation levels accorded to equities.

Take the shake-out in Wall Street at the beginning of the week. The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell by a little over 1 per cent, but Nasdaq was nearly 4 per cent down. Much of this was due to a sudden disenchantment with



BRIAN TORA

Interest rates have come down while the FTSE index has just gone South

Internet stocks, virtually all of which are quoted on this exchange. In a way I find this encouraging.

Not so long ago I read of an Internet company bought by one of the established American high-tech houses for nearly a quarter of a billion dollars. This firm, formed by a small group of young Israeli rocket scientists, had no revenues, no profits - simply ideas. But they were worth a lot of money. Perhaps their aspirations will be translated into revenues in due course. But there are some crazy valuations out there.

Meantime, we have seen a gentle reassessment of some value areas in investment, most notably smaller company stocks where the opportunities and dividend yields, now considerably higher than those achievable on gilts, are at last attracting investors.

Many of these smaller businesses are in manufacturing and sell abroad. I rather think it is more the desperation of money seeking a home at a time when gilt yields are rock bottom, multi-national companies are close to all time highs and there seems little to buy.

Ski stocks are out of the question, but I shall now spend some time trawling the market to see what might have been overlooked.

Brian Tora is head of the asset management division of Greig Middleton

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MORTGAGES	Telephone number	% Rate and period	APR %	Fee	Incentive	Redemption Penalty
FIXED RATES (without redemption fee)						
Barclays BS	0800 325050	4.90% for 2 years	5.0%	£295	Free for 1 year. Adv up to 50%, no MP	1st 2 years: 100 days interest
Newcastle BS	0191 244040	5.10% to 31.3.02	5.0%	£245	Advanced up to 50% - no MP	To 21.3.02 5% of orig balance
West Bromwich BS	0121 600404	5.25% to 30.4.04	5.0%	£250	Free ASU for 1 year	1st 5 years: 5% of orig balance
FIXED RATES (with redemption fee)						
Northern Rock	0845 600500	3.49% to 1.4.01	5.0%	£255	Free ASU for 6 months. Adv up to 50% - no MP	1st 6 yrs: 3.4% of orig balance
Peabody BS	0800 080080	3.89% to 31.3.02	5.0%	£255		To 31.3.02 5% of orig balance
Norwich & Peterborough BS	01733 625035	4.90% for 4 years	5.0%	£255		1st 5 years: 5 months interest
CAPPED RATES						
Barclays BS	0800 119050	4.89% to 1.4.01	5.0%	£255	Advanced up to 50% - no MP	To 31.3.04 4.9% of orig balance
Barclays BS	01782 255150	4.89% to 31.3.02	5.0%	£255		To 31.3.02 5% of orig balance
Scotiabank BS	0800 135140	5.85% for 4 years	5.0%	£255		1st 4 yrs: 5% of orig balance
FIRST TIME BUYERS (variable rates only)						
Coventry BS	0845 600500	3.59% to 31.3.01	5.0%	£255	For subvention up to 100% - no MP	To 31.3.04 3.5% of orig balance
Scotiabank BS	0800 135140	4.20% for 4 years	5.0%	£255	£250 cash rebate	To 31.3.04 4.2% of orig balance
Coventry BS	01332 207000	5.40% for 5 years	5.0%	£255	£250 cash rebate	To 31.3.04 5.4% of orig balance
VARIABLE DISCOUNTED RATES						
Northern Rock	0845 600500	3.30% to 1.4.01	5.0%	£255	Refund value of orig ASU & to 50% - no MP	To 31.3.04 3.3% of orig balance
West Bromwich BS	0121 600404	4.45% for 3 years	5.0%	£255	£250 rebate, free ASU for 1 year	1st 5 years: 5% of orig balance
Hillier	0800 230040	4.95% to 30.4.04	5.0%	£255	Free valuation & legal fees	To 30.4.05 4.9% of orig balance

BEST BORROWING RATES

PERSONAL LOANS	Telephone	APR %	Fixed monthly payment on £10k over 3 yrs
UNSECURED			
Northern Rock	0845 421421	9.9% R	£182.37
Peabody BS	0800 138000	11.2%	£183.40
Direct Line	0181 680 9966	12.25%	£182.34

OVERDRAFTS

Telephone	Account	% per	APR %	% per	APR %
Alfred & Lancaster	0500 950005	Alfred	0.5%	12.0%	2.0%
Malvern BS	0500 303010	Peabody	0.5%	12.0%	2.0%
Abbey National	0800 731774	Bank	1.0%	13.0%	2.2%

CREDIT CARDS

Telephone	Card Type	Rate %	APR %	Annual Fee	Inst. Fee	Inst. Period	Inst. Income
Co-operative Bank	0800 120000	Advance Visa	0.45%	£5.00	Nil	0 days	£20k
Peabody BS	0800 138000	Mastercard/Visa	0.50%	£5.00	Nil	50 days	£20k
Peabody BS	0800 138000	Visa	0.50%	£5.00	Nil	50 days	£20k

GOLD CARDS

Telephone	Card Type	Rate %	APR %	Annual Fee	Inst. Fee	Inst. Period	Inst. Income
Co-operative Bank	0800 404070	Rate Rate Visa	0.45%	£5.00	Nil	0 days	£20k
Co-operative Bank	0800 120000	Adv Gold Visa	0.45%	£5.00	Nil	0 days	£20k
Peabody BS	0800 138000	Mastercard/Visa	0.50%	£5.00	Nil	50 days	£20k

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Telephone	Payment by direct debit	Payment by other methods
John Lewis	1.25%	1.25%
Morris & Spencer	1.25%	1.25%
Dea	1.25%	1.25%

A - Minimum age 22 yrs. Holders of comprehensive motor insurance policy or lender's existing customers
APR - Annualised percentage rate
ASU - Annualised savings unit
B-G - Buildings and contents insurance
H - Higher rate applies if insurance not arranged
I - Loan to value
MP - Mortgage indemnity premium
N - Introductory rate for a limited period
U - Unemployment insurance
S - Withdrawals via Bank Clearing System
F - Fixed rate (all other rates variable)
P - By post only

All rates are shown gross and are subject to change without notice.
Source: MONEYFACTS 01803 476476

All rates subject to change without notice.
Source: MONEYFACTS 01803 476476

BEST SAVINGS RATES

Telephone	Account	Rate	APR %	Inst. Fee	Inst. Period	Inst. Income
Barclays BS	0845 714070	Instant	5.0%	£50	0 days	£20k
Peabody BS	0800 138000	Instant	5.0%	£50	0 days	£20k
Peabody BS	01232 207000	Instant	5.0%	£50	0 days	£20k

NO NOTICE POSTAL ACCOUNTS

Telephone	Account	Rate	APR %	Inst. Fee	Inst. Period	Inst. Income
Peabody BS	0845 600500	Instant	5.0%	£50	0 days	£20k
Peabody BS	0845 600500	Instant	5.0%	£50	0 days	£20k
Peabody BS	0845 600500	Instant	5.0%	£50	0 days	£20k

NOTICE ACCOUNTS & BONDS

Telephone	Account	Rate	APR %	Inst. Fee	Inst. Period	Inst. Income
Peabody BS	0845 600500	Instant	5.0%	£50	0 days	£20k
Peabody BS	0845 600500	Instant	5.0%	£50	0 days	£20k
Peabody BS	0845 600500	Instant	5.0%	£50	0 days	£20k

CHEQUE ACCOUNTS

Telephone	Account	Rate	APR %	Inst. Fee	Inst. Period	Inst. Income
Peabody BS	0845 600500	Instant	5.0%	£50	0 days	£20k
Peabody BS	0845 600500	Instant	5.0%	£50	0 days	£20k
Peabody BS	0845 600500	Instant	5.0%	£50	0 days	£20k

FIXED RATE BONDS

Telephone	Account	Rate	APR %	Inst. Fee	Inst. Period	Inst. Income
Peabody BS	0845 600500	Instant	5.0%	£50	0 days	£20k
Peabody BS	0845 600500	Instant	5.0%	£50	0 days	£20k
Peabody BS	0845 600500	Instant	5.0%	£50	0 days	£20k

FIRST TESSAS

Telephone	Account	Rate	APR %	Inst. Fee	Inst. Period	Inst. Income
Peabody BS	0845 600500	Instant	5.0%	£50	0 days	£20k
Peabody BS	0845 600500	Instant	5.0%	£50	0 days	£20k
Peabody BS	0845 600500	Instant	5.0%	£50	0 days	£20k

FOLLOW-ON TESSAS

Telephone	Account	Rate	APR %	Inst. Fee	Inst. Period	Inst. Income
Peabody BS	0845 600500	Instant	5.0%	£50	0 days	£20k
Peabody BS	0845 600500	Instant	5.0%	£50	0 days	£20k
Peabody BS	0845 600500	Instant	5.0%	£50	0 days	£20k

GUARANTEED INCOME BONDS (net)

Telephone	Account	Rate	APR %	Inst. Fee	Inst. Period	Inst. Income
Peabody BS	0845 600500	Instant	5.0%	£50	0 days	£20k
Peabody BS	0845 600500	Instant	5.0%	£50	0 days	£20k
Peabody BS	0845 600500	Instant	5.0%	£50	0 days	£20k

OFFSHORE ACCOUNTS (gross)

Telephone	Account	Rate	APR %	Inst. Fee	Inst. Period	Inst. Income
Peabody BS	0845 600500	Instant	5.0%	£50	0 days	£20k
Peabody BS	0845 600500	Instant	5.0%	£50	0 days	£20k
Peabody BS	0845 600500	Instant	5.0%	£50	0 days	£20k

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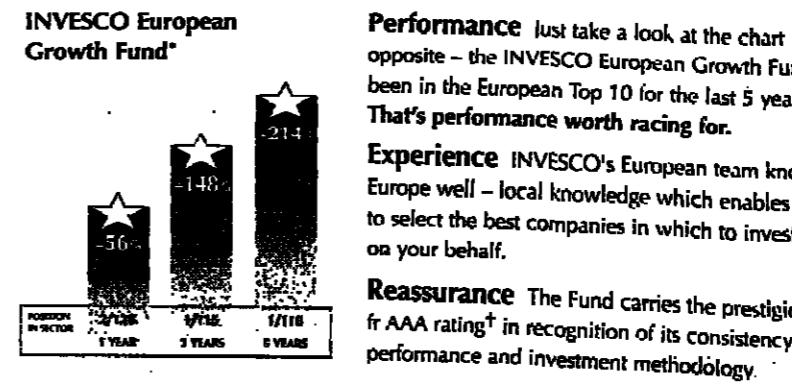
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It's an expensive business

An analysis of funds' add-on costs throws up some interesting anomalies



JONATHAN DAVIS

My comments last week about the costs charged by unit trusts seems to have struck a chord with several readers. Many of you have expressed surprise that there is no formal requirement on funds to disclose their total expense ratios, as opposed to their annual management fee. Most investors naturally assume that the annual management fee includes all the costs that they are going to be charged.

But it is not so. It is true that the extra costs charged are relatively small. The average extra cost is only 0.21 per cent for all UK funds (average management fee 1.18 per cent, average total expense ratio 1.39 per cent). But the average conceals a wide variety of different experience.

It is striking how widely the add-on costs can differ from group to group. In any event, as the analysts at Fitzrovia International point out, even 0.21 per cent equates to a 15 per cent increase in the cost borne by investor. The cumulative effect over several years can still be striking.

The tables shown here summarise the findings. One lists the fund management groups with the highest and lowest total expense ratios in Fitzrovia's universe of equity funds (the data excludes groups which have fewer than three distinct funds to analyse).

It throws up some anomalies, though as I noted last week, a group with a high total expense ratio (such as Jupiter) may well be able to claim that its higher costs are justified.

Most groups with strong track records will tend to try and charge 1.5 per cent per annum as a management fee, this being about the most that the UK market seems willing to bear.

There is a comparison to be made between different funds. Equity funds are the most expensive, on average, but at least it is possible to lay claim to superior performance, even if only a minority beat the market averages over time.

There is no such excuse for bond and cash funds. As Paul Moulton, chief executive of Fitzrovia International, points out, one type of cash fund should be much the same as the next.

Explaining why some groups offer cash funds with total expense ratios between 0.5 and 0.6 per cent, while others charge more than 1.1 per cent, is therefore an interesting question. With bond funds, total expense ratios range from 0.38 per



All that glitters is not gold in the world of investment

Ian Derry/Mirror

cent to groups with ratios above 1.6 per cent.

One moral is that it pays to shop around. There is no point in giving away with one hand much of the benefits gained from taking your money out of the building society in the first place.

Then there are index funds. This hobby horse has already been flogged to death in this column. But you may not have seen that the regular monitoring of tracker versus active funds carried out by HSBC.

It recently showed that the brief triumph of the third quarter last year, when active managers out-performed tracker funds for the first time for some while, was overturned in the last quarter of the year. Only one-third of actively-managed funds beat the index in 1998 and in the past 10 years only one in five has managed the feat.

Fitzrovia's analysis confirms that index funds are also the cheapest way to invest in the equity market. The figures are given in my second table.

UK tracker funds have total expense ratios a third to a half cheaper than those of actively managed funds. Index funds remain the benchmark against which other types of managed fund must be measured. Boring - but true.

HIGHEST AND LOWEST COST FUND MANAGERS			
Highest cost equity fund TERS by manager		Lowest cost equity fund TERS by manager	
Rothschild Asset Management	2.30%	Equitable Unit Trust Managers	0.50%
Jupiter International Group	2.08%	Royal London Unit Trust Managers	0.67%
AIB Govett Asset Management	1.95%	Flemings	0.85%
Old Mutual International	1.93%	Scottish Equitable Group	1.06%
Ely Place Investments	1.91%	M&G	1.06%
Metropolitan Unit Trust Managers	1.90%	Scottish Life Assurance Company	1.08%
Johnson Fry Asset Management	1.84%	CIS (Co-operative Insurance Society)	1.08%
City Financial Centre	1.83%	Scottish Mutual	1.10%
Marlborough Fund Managers	1.79%	Schroders	1.12%

Source: Fitzrovia International

UK FUNDS COMPARED						
Total expense ratios, %, by area of investment						
	UK	US	Europe	World	Japan	Far East
Equity fund	1.39	1.47	1.52	1.51	1.60	1.73
Index fund	0.92	0.80	0.88	1.01	0.79	1.00
Difference	0.47	0.67	0.64	0.50	0.81	0.73

Source for performance figures Standard & Poor's Microcap Offer to offer set income reinvested to 1st January 1999. "1st" means top quartile performance over five years in the individual Standard & Poor's Microcap sector; in the case of Global Growth since launch on 1.10.96. ISAs will be introduced from 6th April 1999 for an initial ten year period. All Personal Equity Plans held in 5th April 1999 will be unable to accept further contributions, however they can continue to be held outside the ISA with the same tax advantages. A 10% tax credit on all dividend distributions may be retained up to 5th April 2004. The value of current tax relief depends on individual circumstances. If you have any doubts about your tax position, you should seek professional advice. If you have any doubts whether this product is suitable for you and you wish to obtain personal advice, please contact an independent financial adviser. You must read the Terms and Conditions before investing. The value of investments and the income from them may go down as well as up and you may not get back the amount originally invested. Past performance is not necessarily a guide to future performance. Emerging markets are volatile and can suffer from liquidity problems. Changes in rates of exchange between currencies may also cause the value of investments to decrease or increase. Telephone calls may be recorded, handled and approved by Gartmore Investment Limited. Gartmore's authorised unit trusts are managed by Gartmore Fund Managers Limited. Both companies are regulated by IMRO and the Personal Investment Authority and are members of the NewWest and Gartmore Marketing Group, Gartmore House, 16-18 Montague Street, London EC3R 6AL.

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How the monster eats your savings

Let's hope that the Government's proposals for pensions remove some of the charging scandals. By John Chapman

If there is one unifying theme to all the Treasury's proposals on pensions - from stakeholder schemes to the new unit and investment trust-backed vehicle discussed last week - it is an emphasis on the need for low-charging funds.

The Treasury's insistence on low-cost products has informed its plans on "CATmarking", or setting benchmarks for investments. It is also reflected in an unrelenting hostility to the way life insurance companies are perceived to be levying heavy fees on the pensions they sell to the public.

There is no question that many companies impose heavy charges. These can take several forms.

Most plans have so-called "bid/offer spreads" of 5 per cent. This means that if you place £100 in a pension today, it will only be worth £95 tomorrow. Then there are fund charges of around 1 per cent a year, falling to 0.5 per cent after some 10 years.

Unit trust PEPs have similar charges, of course. However, pension companies then slip in plan fees of around £3 per month, which rise with inflation. Even then, with most companies, such charges fall well short of covering their costs, which are dominated by the heavy commissions they pay those people and firms who sell their products. Big-hitting charges now come into play.

The most common way this is done involves sharp reductions in the allocation of early premiums into investment units. In other words, in the first year or two that you pay premiums into a pension, a large slice of your money disappears in charges.

The lowest allocations include 35 per cent of premiums paid for 30 months with Allied Dunbar, 30 per cent for 27 months with Eagle Star, and 35 per cent for 24 months with Sun Life of Canada. This means that if you pay premiums of £200 a month for 2 years, a total of £4,800, you can say goodbye to £3,120 or £3,360 if the fund grows by 9 per cent a year.

The most misleading way in which policyholders are charged is through the use of "capital units". Premiums for year one, or years one and two, will often go into these units. Charges on capital units affect you in two ways.

First, if you stop paying premiums, you will lose a substantial chunk of them. For example, if you stop paying £200 monthly premiums at the end of year two with plans from Canada Life or J Rothschild, you would lose around £2,500 or £3,000.

Second, even if you keep paying premiums into the pension, your capital units are subject to levies as high as 6 per cent a year - for the duration of the pension. This means that if investment growth is 9 per cent a year your capital units would grow at only 3 per cent a year. There will always be a chunk of your pension affected in this way, no matter how long you continue paying premiums.

Of course, companies argue that over the years, the effect of capital units is gradually diluted. However, the reverse applies if a policyholder halts contributions into the pension, as

However, with other charges, the RIV may not be constant. Thus, a plan fee of £3 a month, rising in line with inflation, would reduce 9 per cent annual growth to 7.4 per cent after 7 years, and to 8.7 per cent after 10 years. The plan fee has an RIV of 1.6 per cent at 2 years and only 0.3 per cent after 10 years.

If only 50 per cent of premiums for years 1 and 2 are allocated to a plan, the effective investment growth of all the premiums would be minus 4.75 per cent a year by year two.

This would change to minus 1.2 per cent a year by year five, and to plus 6.3 per cent a year by year 10. The RIVs of such a reduction in early allocations would then be 56.5 per cent at year 2, 10.2 per cent at year 5 and 2.8 per cent at year 10.

Confused? You should be. The RIV make-ups of big-hitting mixes of charges are illustrated in the first part of our table. The effects of charges like bid/offer spreads, annual fund charges and plan fees, are dwarfed by the big-hitting charges. Some 27 well-known companies are listed as using such heavy charges, but many others do. Taking account of lapses, towards half or more of the plan-holders of these companies stand to make losses or very poor returns.

But not all pension companies have such big-hitting charges, as shown in the second part of the table. Some companies, six of which sell through independent financial advisers, such as Standard Life and Scottish Widows, recoup costs through small but constant cuts in allocations of money invested by policyholders. There is also a growing band of very low charge companies, as Equitable Life is joined by direct sellers like Virgin, Direct Line and several others.

Ignorance of the situation is the basic reason why people still buy plans with hard-hitting charges. But that ignorance has been backed by the inaction of governments and regulators. Up to now, they have appeared stupefied by an industrial monster which consumes rather than multiplies the savings of up to half the people it is meant to serve.

It is to be hoped that the Government's new initiatives will help to bring this all to an end.

The most misleading way in which policyholders are charged is through 'capital units'

more of the overall fund will always be hit at the higher level.

A charitable interpretation of these charges is that only a few people stop paying premiums, or that companies do not expect lapses to happen. The truth is different. Recent figures from the Personal Investment Authority, the financial watchdog, indicate that, depending on the sales outlet, some 30 to 40 per cent of planholders stop paying premiums by the end of the fourth year. With many companies, over half the planholders stop by the end of the fifth year. Companies not only know about lapses - they plan their charges to take account of them.

The effects of individual charges can be compared through "reductions in yield", or RIV. But this can be confusing to many. For example, assuming investment growth at 9 per cent a year, a 1 per cent annual charge would reduce growth to 8 per cent, an RIV of 1 per cent.



Many private pension holders are being ripped off Phil Dye/SDR

HOW PENSION FIRMS SHORT-CHANGE US

with reduction in yield make-ups, %

Early reductions in allocations	yr1	yr5	yr10	yr15	yr25	Companies using type of rate
5% bid/offer spread	5.1	2.1	1.0	0.6	0.3	Abbey National, Allied Dunbar, Aegon, Cornhill, Eagle Star, Legal & General, Lloyds TSB, Midland, Norwich, Norwich Union F&W, Royal London, Scottish Life and Sun Life of Canada.
Fund charge 1% pa, & 0.5% pa after 10 years	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.8	0.6	
50% reduction in allocations for 2 years then 100% allocation of premiums	56.5	8.8	2.0	0.8	0.6	
Plan fee (£3m pm)	1.6	0.6	0.3	0.2	0.2	
Overall RIVs	64.2	12.5	4.3	2.5	1.7	
Capital units for first year premiums	yr1	yr5	yr10	yr15	yr25	
5% bid/offer spread	5.1	2.1	1.0	0.6	0.3	Barclays, Britannia, Friends Provident F&W, London & Manchester Pensions and National Mutual.
Fund charge 1% pa	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	
1 year units with 6% levy	47.2	8.6	2.4	1.2	0.5	
Overall RIVs	53.3	11.7	4.4	2.8	1.8	
Capital units for first two years premiums	yr1	yr5	yr10	yr15	yr25	
5% bid/offer spread	5.1	2.1	1.0	0.6	0.3	Canada Life, J Rothschild, and London & Manchester Associates.
Fund charge 0.3% pa	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	
2 year units with 3.5% levy	69.9	12.6	4.6	1.7	0.7	
Plan fee (£3m pm)	1.6	0.6	0.3	0.2	0.2	
Overall RIVs	76.9	15.6	5.2	2.9	1.5	
Penalties on transfer	yr1	yr5	yr10	yr15	yr25	
5% bid/offer spread	5.1	2.1	1.0	0.6	0.3	Abbey Life, Guardian and Skandia.
Fund charge 1.2% pa	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	
Plan fee (£4m pm)	2.1	0.8	0.4	0.4	0.4	
Typical large penalty	59.0	11.5	4.6	2.0	0.9	
Overall RIVs	67.4	15.6	7.2	4.2	1.8	
Constant reductions in allocations	yr1	yr5	yr10	yr15	yr25	
5% bid/offer spread	5.1	2.1	1.0	0.6	0.3	GGU, Halifax, Royal Sun Alliance, Scot Amicable, Scottish Widows and Standard Life.
5% reduction in all allocations	5.2	2.1	1.0	0.7	0.4	
Fund charge 1% pa, & 0.5% pa after 10 years	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.8	0.6	
Plan fee (£3m pm)	1.6	0.6	0.3	0.2	0.2	
Overall RIVs	12.9	5.8	3.3	2.6	1.5	
Mixes in some very low charge plans	yr1	yr5	yr10	yr15	yr25	
Direct Line	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	
Fund charge 1% pa	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	
2% reduction in all allocations	2.1	0.8	0.5	0.3	0.2	
Overall RIVs	3.1	1.9	1.5	1.3	1.2	
Equitable Life	3.6	1.4	0.7	0.4	0.3	
5.5% bid/offer spread	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	
Fund charge 0.5% pa	4.1	1.9	1.2	0.9	0.7	
Overall RIVs	4.1	1.9	1.2	0.9	0.7	
Virgin Direct	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	
Fund charge 1% pa	1.3	0.6	0.3	0.3	0.1	
£2 per contribution	2.3	1.6	1.3	1.3	1.1	
Overall RIVs	2.3	1.6	1.3	1.3	1.1	

Notes: The combined effect of charges is very marginally less than the sum of the individual effects, as charges impact in turn on reduced funds.

Source: John Chapman in Money Management, January 1999

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سكزا من الامم

A casual attitude to skiing insurance can prove very costly. By Teresa Hunter

Don't be a fall guy

ONLY A madman would sit behind the wheel of a car without adequate insurance. Yet, as tens of thousands of UK families prepare to strap on skis during the coming half-term holiday, many of them will do so without a thought for the consequences of an accident. If so, they should take note of the fact that a huge surge in law suits means courts are now determined that someone should pay for any reckless frolicking in the snow. British lawyers are very concerned at the way UK skiers head for the winter sun with hardly any basic understanding of rules that Europeans regard as a legally enforceable highway code of the snow. This leaves them vulnerable to criminal prosecution as well as claims for compensation. Furthermore, UK insurers are now encouraging policyholders to sue for loss of earnings, pain and suffering. Winter sport litigation expert, Bronwen Courtenay-Stamp, of the solicitors Stone, Cann and Hallett, explains: "We all know the Americans are very litigious, but people underestimate the extent to which

Europeans have always been quick to sue for skiing accidents. Over the last couple of years we have seen an explosion in claims."

The need for a well designed ski insurance policy is clear and travellers who simply opt for the policy at the back of a holiday brochure, or worse still opt out altogether, could be making the most expensive mistake of their lives.

David Sterling, of specialist ski insurer Crispian Spiers argues: "Whatever happens, if you have insurance, you have someone on your side. Insurers will support you in very difficult circumstances. But buying the right policy is essential."

A good policy should provide £2m third-party liability cover. However most ski policies will not cover accidents on a mechanical vehicle, such as a snowmobile, so you need to consult a specialist broker for that.

Research also reveals that one in 10 people who go skiing this winter will need medical assistance following an injury, but the same accident can cost widely differing amounts depending on the resort.

Brokers recommend a minimum of £1 million medical cover, but this should not be viewed as some kind



A simple accident can wipe the smiles off the slopes if you are not properly insured. Allsport

of private medical insurance. It is catastrophe cover, designed to provide emergency treatment and to get you home. Any prior medical condition is strictly excluded.

A spokesman for the Insurance Ombudsman warns: "Policyholders should get approval for all medical treatment before it takes place to prevent disputes when they return to this country."

"A doctor in Switzerland might say that a particular form of treatment might possibly be necessary; the insurer could later dispute this."

The Ombudsman relies on doctors on the spot when it comes to arbitrating disputes, but to avoid wrangles keep the insurer informed and get copies of all medical reports.

Another contentious area is the loss of skis or equipment. Although most policies cover skiing equipment, they nearly all spell out the skier's "duty of care". So, if you leave your skis outside a restaurant or bar (extremely common) and they are stolen, the policy will not pay out.

One exception is the contract from ski specialists DCT. A spokesman explains: "The reality is you can't expect skiers to walk into a restaurant wearing their skis. If you claim to be a specialist ski insurer, you have to cover the skis."

David Sterling has his own tip. "Split your skis up when you go in. Put one round one side of the restaurant and one around the other."

Always make sure that your policy covers passes, ski packs and lessons which you might be unable to use following an injury, but beware, as some policies set low daily limits, which would not cover all your loss.

Similarly opt for a contract which compensates for piste closure following poor weather conditions.

Many skiers are opting for annual travel policies, which allow them a summer break and typically provide two weeks of winter sports cover. Options offers an annual Europe plan for £28, with a family policy from TravelPlan Direct starting at £66.50. Frequent skier policies provide up to four weeks' annual ski cover, starting at around £50, but are more costly for those flying to the US.

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Options 01252 747747	20.00	3,000	150 per item	35	yes	yes	no
Direct Travel 01903 812345	20.30	5,000	600	150	35	yes	yes
Travel Plan Direct 0800 018 8747	20.50	3,000	350	100	30	no	no
Note: Options has £2,000 max on all baggage claims.							
USA/CANADA							
Options	50.60	3,000	150 per item	35	yes	no	no
Worldwide Travel 01892 833338	50.90	1,000	350	200	40	yes	no
Columbus Direct 0171 375 0011	53.00	3,000	500	300	35	yes	no
Direct Travel	54.50	5,000	600	150	35	yes	yes
FREQUENT ANNUAL Including us single (family premium in brackets)							
Direct Travel	75.00 (105)	3,000	400	150	35	yes	yes
Travel Plan Direct	91.50 (143.5)	3,000	350	100	30	no	no
WIBA 0171 623 9043	96.97 (160.09)	5,000	500	200	30	no	yes
Boots 0845 840 2020	99.00 (148.50)	5,000	500	500	50	no	no

DON'T GET PISTE OFF

AS THE glistening sea of virgin snow beckons, not many people stop to think that most policies exclude off-piste skiing. That detail is often buried in the small print.

Even one reputable high-street retailer has produced a leaflet for its winter sports insurance policy showing skiers skiing off-piste - although off-piste skiing is excluded by the policy, unless the policyholder is

accompanied by a qualified instructor or a guide.

And the page which lists activities that are not covered depicts skiers off piste.

A spokesman for the company says that there was no intention to deliberately mislead, and that the wording of the brochure was perfectly clear.

The pictures were merely chosen to reflect winter sports activities, the spokesman added.

Millions facing hard times at retirement

Pension planning is vital for so many. By Nic Cicutti

DESPITE THE constant talk about the need for retirement planning and Government initiatives on the pensions front, more people than ever before face financial hardship when they halt work.

These are the findings of a survey by Fleming Asset Management, the investment trust and pension provider. They show that, since 1996, when the company carried out its last survey on the same issue, the number of people who would be badly off at retirement has grown from 10 million to 13 million.

The perception by individuals that they will be worse off in retirement also appears to be growing: whereas 62 per cent of people surveyed in 1996 felt they would be better off, this dropped to 51 per cent three years later.

Ian Overgate, marketing manager at Flemings, says: "Even with the Government's proposals for lower earners announced in the recent Green Paper, the vast majority of people will still not benefit. People who are earning a decent salary simply cannot rely on the state."

Fleming's research also shows that the number of people aged 50 to 59 who will be entering into retirement in financial hardship has dou-

bled to 1.2 million since 1996. This is caused by sharply falling annuity rates, which will reduce substantially the payout to be expected from maturing personal pensions or so-called money purchase schemes. Actuaries are adjusting their annuity rates downwards to compensate for the fact that people now live longer, on average.

In particular, self-employed people are likely to be hit hard. In 1996, some 54 per cent were not putting enough into their pension, a figure which grew to 64 per cent in 1999. This compares with 44 per cent of employees who are not making enough provision for their future.

Women taking career breaks are affected too: a failure to invest in a pension while bringing up children can have a disproportionate effect on retirement income. This is because money invested at an early point in a career has the opportunity to grow for the longest period of time before retirement - or not, if a person stops work to raise a family.

Flemings has produced a free guide to pensions, which explores the issue of how to plan for a financially secure retirement. Call 0500 500161

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PROPERTY



'We must be bonkers. The house has taken over our lives. We've been tired, fed up and ended up arguing - and we haven't had a holiday in four years' - the true confessions of a DIY enthusiast

TURN TO PAGE 15

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Roller-coaster ride to riches

Spread betting is a high-risk gamble that lets you punt on anything from the predicted value of the euro to the number of times Gordon Brown sips a drink during his Budget speech. Get it right and you could make a fortune. By Simon Read

Spread betting occupies an uneasy position between serious investment and mainstream gambling – risking money for the sheer thrill of it. It is definitely not for the faint-hearted. On any particular trade, wins can realistically total hundreds of times your initial stake. However, the potential to lose a similar sum is just as great.

It offers the roller-coaster ride of derivatives trading to everyone. Many of the UK's 20,000 account holders concentrate on sport, but two companies, City Index and IG Index, offer a range of financial markets. For those wishing to speculate on the FTSE, foreign exchange markets or a range of commodities, spread betting provides a straightforward means of trading without broker's fees. This new way of betting has revolutionised wagering on sport. In a cricket match, every run scored can be vital to your financial position.

The ability to open and close trades in the middle of the event means that you need to keep a close eye on proceedings. At the start of each Test innings, a spread company will offer a market on the number of runs the batting side will achieve. If the initial "spread" is 280-300, you can choose to predict lower than 280 (selling) or higher than 300 (buying).

You choose to go lower than 280 (sell). The batting side collapses to 180 all out. You win the difference between 280 and 180 (or 100), multiplied by your stake.

If things had not gone to plan, and the batting side had reached a total of 500, you would lose the difference between 500 and 280 (220), again, multiplied by your stake.

Even a small stake of £1 can result in a very expensive afternoon in front of the TV set.

This principle can be applied to a variety of sporting and financial markets – the number of corners in a football match, or the number of points the FTSE rises. In every case you are risking your stake on each occurrence of an event.

Setting up a trading account with one of the four UK companies requires proof that you have the means to cover conceivable losses. A vast range of markets is then available to trade instantly by phone. These may be on the great economic issues of the day, such as the euro, or the faintly ridiculous. One company offered a market

on how many times Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, would take a sip from his glass of water while giving the November Budget speech.

Spread betting can offer a means of hedging risk for companies. Where the strength of the pound affects a firm's export market, it is possible to set up a hedge against damaging currency fluctuations.

For many others, the spread betting companies simply offer an opportunity for private individuals to play the stock market with the big boys. The US has a culture of independent traders – individuals working from home with the aid of a PC (to track prices) and a trading account.

Undoubtedly the market for financial spread betting in the UK is growing as City traders open their own private accounts. Curiously, financial trading also appears to be popular with a new breed of astute pensioners who are throwing off their gardening gloves in favour of the cut and thrust of the foreign exchange market.

Financial spread betting must come with a health warning. One client, who had a buy position during the October 1987 crash, was faced with a bill for £500,000. Spread betting debts are payable immediately and, unlike gambling debts, are recoverable by law.

The massive gearing on spread bets is reflected in the emotional ups and downs of the account-holder. The realisation that a bet is about to yield an enormous profit can become linked with your own sense of self-esteem and intellectual prowess. When losses appear, the opposite is true. A serious unexpected loss may be accompanied by a degree of shock, developing into something resembling clinical depression. Whatever chinks lurk in the account-holder's psychological armour, spread betting is liable to expose them ruthlessly.

However, the excitement and drama that a spread bet creates are unbeatable in any other form of speculation or investment. For those who are sure that they have information or knowledge that the spread companies have not considered, the rewards are there for the taking.

'Successful Spread Betting', by Geoff Harvey, is available from bookshops at £12.95. Independent readers may obtain a copy for only £9.95 post free (saving £3) from the publishers on 01423-307545



HOW SPREAD BETTING WORKS TRADING ON THE EURO

You think that the euro launch will be a success and the pound is in for a bumpy ride in the next few weeks. How would you spread bet on this opinion?

- A spread company offers a quarterly market on the euro against sterling, closing on 12 March 1999. The previous days close was one euro = 7127. (Effectively 71.27p; decimal places are ignored).
- The company is offering a spread of 7076 - 7096.
- You think the pound will lose value (it will require more sterling to buy one euro) so you make a 'buy' trade at the quoted price of 7096 for a stake of £5.
- On the 12 March the value of the pound has dropped and it now takes 7185 to buy one euro.
- Your gain is the difference between the final value and your buy price. (7185 minus 7096). This gives a total gain of 89.
- Multiply this by your stake of £5. You win £445.

Save for a baby break

Flexible mortgages may hold the key. By Ian Morse

NONE OF us grudge spending money on our children, but the cost of a baby break can hit hard at family finances. For many households, the single most expensive item of monthly expenditure is a mortgage payment. Having a home loan sufficiently flexible to help cope with this change in circumstance seems sensible.

Women now account for 44 per cent of the workforce and more than one third of these have children aged under 16. Estimates vary, but the average cost per household of a nine-month baby break has been put at £9,000.

While recent changes in the law guarantee a minimum level of both maternity leave and pay, this applies only to those who are employed. For those who change jobs more often (often women), do part-time work, or have been with an employer for less time, benefits can be small. Traditional mortgages are rigidly structured, with no facility for over- or under payment.

If you have one, the only solution to saving for a baby break is to open a deposit account. But the interest you receive then is paid net of your marginal rate of income tax. Average gross returns are £10,000 on 90 days deposits are 5.5 per cent, falling to 4.24 per cent for a basic rate taxpayer and just 3.3 per cent for anyone paying the higher rate. Those rates are falling.

With current average mortgage rates at least 1.2 per cent higher, you will immediately save more interest than you can earn by paying extra cash into a flexible mortgage. New flexible mortgages have come to the market, some allowing both over- and under-payments. Providers such as First Active, Legal & General, Virgin One and Standard Life have developed loans that allow you to overpay, then borrow back the surplus you have built up.

Simonne Gnessen, 33, works as an independent financial

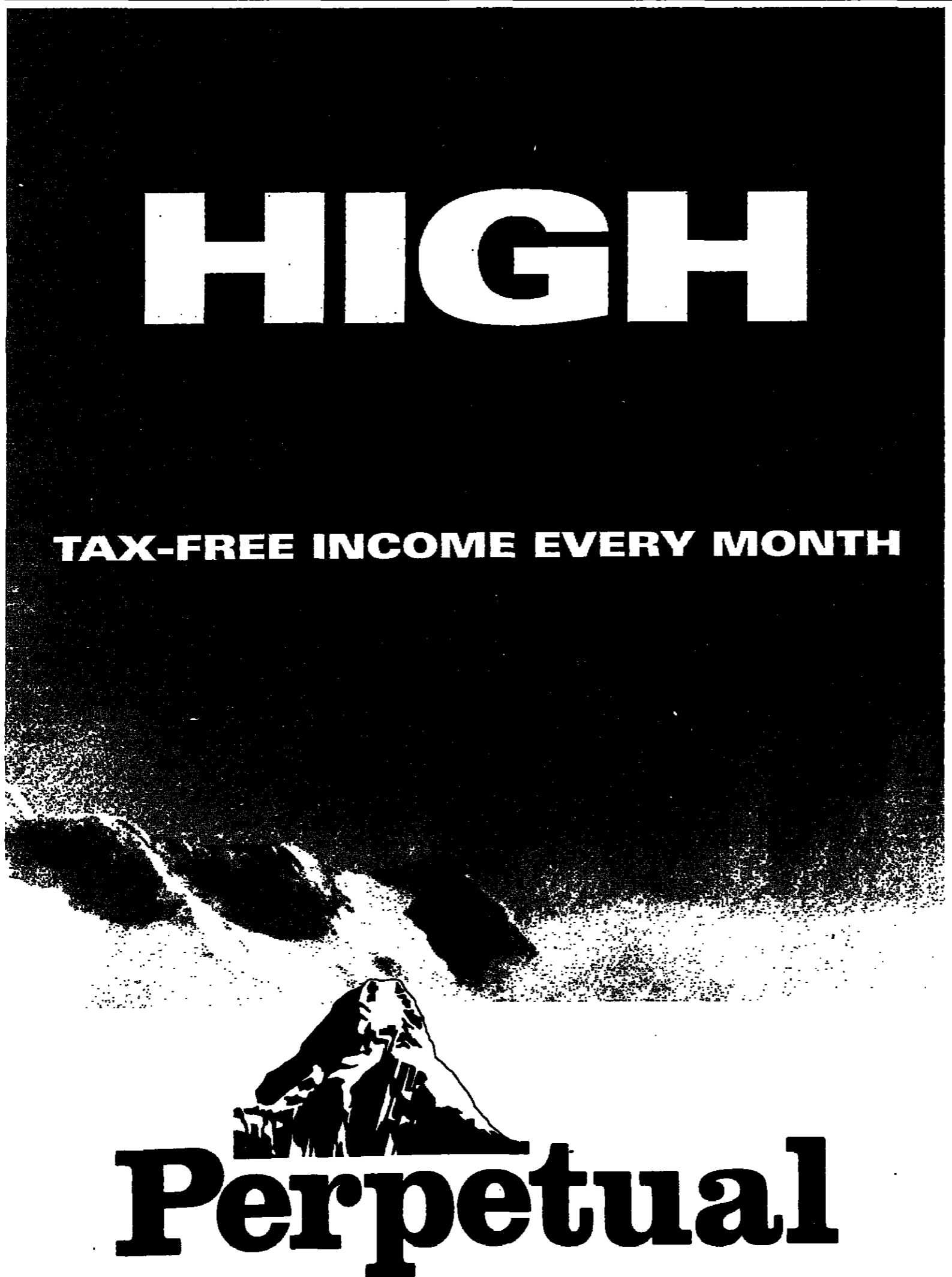
adviser with Fiona Price & Partners, a London-based firm. She says: "Right now I'm thinking about re-mortgaging. The key to good financial planning is to pick an option that meets as many changes of circumstance as possible. I have to consider the possibility of having children and any reduction in earnings resulting from this. But I also have to think about unforeseen career changes," Gnessen adds.

"The benefits of flexibility need to be balanced against other types of mortgage, such as capped, fixed or discounted loans. These may be cheaper, but do not necessarily provide all the facilities of a flexible mortgage."

"Flexible loans can be ideal for young high earners who have a basic salary with big bonuses. They can pay in bonuses now, then borrow back some of this later if needed. This could be very useful during maternity leave."

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Ethnic is chic again, but care is needed to find the right items – strong shapes are the most stylish. By Karen Falconer

All the world's a store

Think again if talk of ethnic trends evokes images of colourful Indian bazaars and ageing hippies. And this time think big, think bold, think clutter-free karma. For, while ethnicity is clearly ruling the domestic roost, it has been born again as global minimalism.

The new global chic is about beautiful pieces and a very modern look. Quiet and cultured, it is the ultimate in all that is calm, meditative and perfectly proportioned. Yet, as Michael Reeves (1998 International Interior Designer of the Year) reflects, it can be large in scale and is certainly not afraid to make dramatic statements via shape or colour.

In Reeves's South Kensington shop, African masks (£185), heavy wooden shanti stools (from £325), and Mogul shields (£720) provide highlights around modern sleek chairs (he's about to launch a collection in Joseph, Fulham Road) and imposing, in-laid cabinets.

"I love art deco, but 100 per cent art deco is dead," he says. "The whammy, wow factor comes from something old, ethnic or oriental. It's the eclectic mix and the scale of things that matters. I'm not one for Chinese, Oriental or African knick-knacks. I use pieces for statements, anything ethnic that has a very strong shape."

Reeves opened his shop after realising that he spent most of his time scouting around trade fairs or antique markets for his interiors clients. Among his favourite pieces at the moment are Chinese hardwood chairs (£750), and aged wooden cartwheels which he mounts on wooden plinths with steel rods, and which are as effective as any modern sculpture. At £275 they are not cheap but, nevertheless, are in short supply. "I just went to the dealer to buy another 10," says Reeves. "But I only managed to secure four as they've sold out so fast."

Contrasts – scale and texture, old and new – feature strongly in fellow interior designer William Yeoward's warehouse in Battersea. He's transformed it from an old wreck into a place where, he says, people would want to live.



Above: 'Ming' fabric, £29.99/metre, John Lewis. Top right: mango wood pots, £305-£385, Yeoward South. Bottom right: Mexican basalt planter, £235, Encompass

After working for others, like Tricia Guild, Yeoward decided to go it alone. "I'd started travelling – Asia, Australia – and realised there was a lot in the world that was wonderful. So I started to import stuff. I love really good craftsmanship – bone, basketware, pottery – but often when I see good quality work, the design isn't what I'd chose, so I work with them. For example, in Indonesia the bottles are covered in the finest wicker. But I'd decide to do wicker lamps, tables or bases. It can

be the same in Cornwall: I'll change a mug into an umbrella stand. I'm not frightened of scale. It's a matter of twisting the elements and making them fit into the formula."

One of the advantages of shopping with a Yeoward or Reeves is that they help you organise disparate pieces into a harmonious whole. Simon Scott Ray, owner of Chichester-based Encompass Furniture and Accessories, doesn't do that. But his imports, hunted out from Mexican villages and made using

indigenous skills (he studied and worked in Mexico and now spends many months there each year) have already been noticed by the likes of David Champion, Louis Vuitton and the General Trading Company.

"In Mexico, there's a different attitude to artisans," he says, anxious to knock back any idea that he might be exploiting people. "They're a respected class, revered for the traditional, beautiful things they make, turned into their own art form."

He sells several different ranges:

lattice furniture, made in Mexico by a Frenchman from sustainable tropical hardwood (from £220 for a footstool, or £1,035 a loveseat); sand-cast aluminium furniture (from £1,189 for a table and four chairs); calada lamps (from £169) and hand-carved basalt sculptures (pestle and mortar £12, planter £165). "The artisans have taken the traditional pestle and mortar form, for which they are famous, a few steps further," explains Simon Scott Ray. "As they are non-porous, they're suitable for

beautiful, minimalist interiors filled with lilies or orchids. Or as bird baths or sculptures outside." He also sells antique sweet moulds as candle holders (from £160). "If things look good together, they can be antique, Mexican, or Swedish – they all work for me," he adds.

This is the essence of Browns Living, the homewares extension to the designer fashion store, where Vietnamese cracked porcelain bowls (£18) and black lacquered plates (£45) are equally at home with

woven Vietnamese chicken baskets (from £35) or African oak plates (£600). There are even cushions (£1,395) and bolsters (£350) made of antique Japanese kimonos. "We constantly have new things coming from all over the world – Europe, Middle East, Africa, America," says the manager, Guiti Benjamin.

Finding beautiful products from around the world is certainly not a problem today. Country-specific shops, like the India Shop in Marlborough (mail order catalogue also available) or the more Indonesian-biased Ananda in Brighton, are springing up all across Britain. The Somerset-based Sala Design, for example, has a wonderful, diverse collection of contemporary African pieces, including bowls and jars made from Kenyan soapstone (from £8.95), sisal baskets (from £6.95) and milk jugs made from African old wood (from £24.95).

Many high street stores also have an excellent selection: John Lewis has Andrew Martin's striking fabrics, including Ming (£29.90 per metre) in a choice of rust red, caramel or cream with large black calligraphy (unfortunately, there's more style than substance as the words mean nothing); and hand-woven Gabbeh rugs made by Iranian tribes. Designer's Guild has a selection of Japanese incense (from £27) and beautifully packaged Vietnamese rice bowls (£4.50) and teapots (£39).

Modern ethnic is modern chic. Wherever one looks, it will be there in some form. But it's worth remembering that it only works when dipped into in an occasional, selective manner. The art is in spotting a beautiful piece (or two) from around the world that speaks volumes, but which is too modest to want to be the centre of attention at the household party.

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Browns Living: 0171-514 0000
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Encompass: 01256 862353
John Lewis: 0171-629 7711 for nearest store
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When you have a problem, it's the most natural thing in the world to want to talk it through with someone.

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An obvious choice would be a close friend. But let's face it, we don't always choose our friends for their amazing powers of tact, diplomacy and discretion. Tell one person, and you may end up telling the world.

You may be lucky enough to be able to talk to someone in your family. Then again, you may be one of the large number of people who find talking to your nearest and dearest agonisingly embarrassing.

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YOU'VE WOKEN up to the ghastly realisation that it's Valentine's Day tomorrow, and although your lover professes not to subscribe to such commercial claptrap, an offering is needed to avert big-time sulking.

But what to get? Shopping experts from Teller and Harrods have joined forces this year to offer succour at the Harrods Valentine Help Desk. Open from 10am-6pm, and located in the fine jewellery department on the ground floor, the Help Desk team will do their damndest to suggest the perfect gift within your budget, however tricky your Valentine. They'll even

feed you chocolates while they quiz you as to your sweetheart's desire.

Their aim is to give you lots of original and innovative shopping advice. They won't just suggest champagne and flowers: they'll recommend the trendiest brands and the hippest flowers, or hot pink Prada lingerie, pure white linen sheets, or dinner for two delivered directly to your door.

You can phone the help desk (0171-730 1234) but unless you order something wildly extravagant – a grand piano, for instance – they won't be able to deliver in time for the big day.

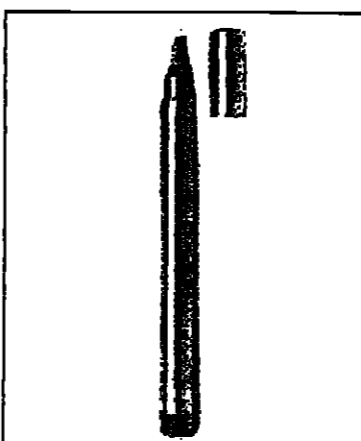


SIX OF THE BEST

LOVE LETTER BUYS



Love Letters, fruit jellies, £2.50, Habitat (0645 334 433)



Silver perfume pen, £12.25, Jo Malone (0171-720 0202)



Violet-scented purple ink, £12, The Italian Corner (0171-499 9469)



David Hayward's silver inkwell, £149, The Room (0171-225 3255)



Aluminium paperweight, £6.95, Ocean mail order (0870 848 4840)



Glass inkwell and pen stopper, £70, Smythson (0171-629 8558)

I WANT TO OWN...
FOODIE GADGETS

A man's place is in the kitchen

Bored of the usual round of Belgian truffles and candlelit restaurant meals? Worried that last year's gift of Agent Provocateur lingerie was considered to have been for your benefit rather than hers? Can't get a reservation and/or a baby-sitter for love nor money? If you answer in the affirmative to any or all of the above, then you may still be racking your brains as to how to apply the tender, personal touch to tomorrow's big night in.

Yes, a Valentine's Day gift constructed out of your toenail clippings would be unique - but perhaps pulling off a Jean-Pierre Marco what's-his-name White by preparing a special meal with your own gnarled hands would be worth more Fairy Liquid points in the long run. Like *South Park's* Chef said: "There's nothing more sexy than a man who can cook, except maybe Tia Carrere in a bikini."

If the task seems insurmountable, even in this enlightened new age, then maybe it's because you've been wrestling with the wrong tools. (People who say "you can't blame the tools" have obviously never owned a cheap, non-stick frying pan.) Whether or not a real man cooks or eats quiche is largely irrelevant, compared to his choice of utensils to chop, toast, broil and batter.

So take a look around your kitchen. If you don't have the following items, then you could always put your love to the test by suggesting the Pizza Hut Valentine's Day special.

Crocodile Dundee famously said: "Now this is a knife." The polished steel block contains eight of them, including a flexible 15cm utility knife, a 20cm cook's knife and a 22cm bread knife.

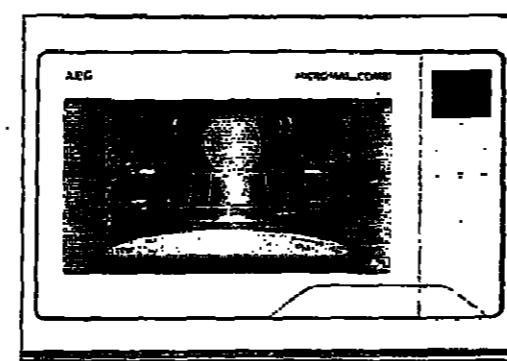
Style: ★★★★★
Anything else worth considering? A Global ceramic knife sharpener (£59) to keep the blades fresh. For something more traditional, Wusthof Trident knives combine old school blades with a black, abrasive-resistant polyamide handle (£39.95 for the bread knife, from Heal's, 0171-636 1666).

Pans people
Name: Cuprinox 26cm frying pan.
Price: £29.
Stockist: 01603 488 019.
Description: If Vic Reeves was to hit Bob Mortimer with this, he'd probably kill him. Chance would be a fine thing, however, since these copper-skinned, stainless steel-lined pans are so heavy you'd need to do boot-camp training just to lift them on and off the hob. These are pans for men. Each comes with a 25-year guarantee, hardly surprising given the bolts they've used to hold the handles on - I've seen hull doors on ocean-going car ferries with less substantial welding.

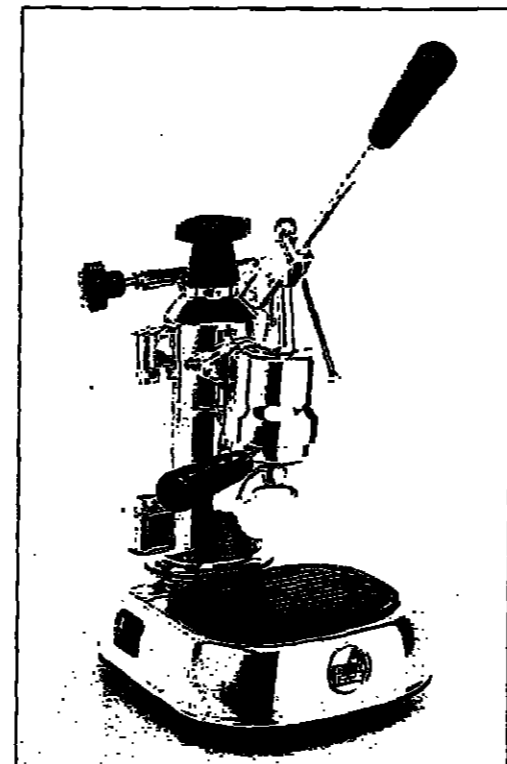
Style: ★★
Anything else worth considering? Obviously there's a whole Cuprinox range (the £139, 24cm, 3-litre sauté pan and lid are essential) but if you find shiny copper reminiscent of knick-knacks gathering dust in rural pubs, then you may prefer something made of pure stainless steel.

Meyer's Professional range (£48 for a 20cm saucepan and lid, from Heal's, 0171-636 1666) are not only stylish, but are also dishwasher safe, essential for the modern man's culinary requirements.

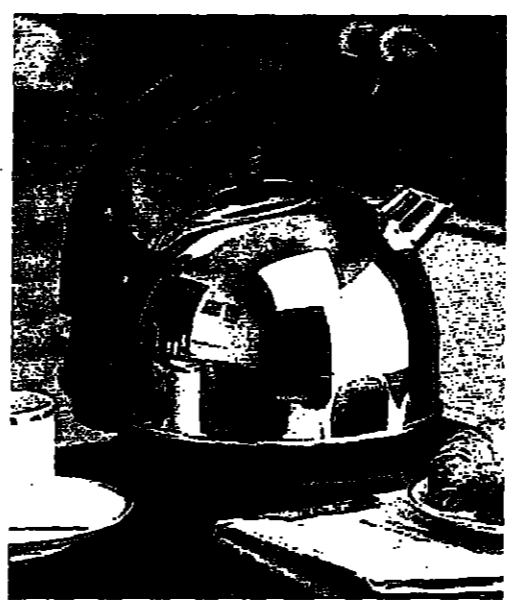
The dirty dozen
Name: Siemens SE 25530 Dishwasher.
Price: £699.
Stockist: 01908 328 400.
Description: It may be hellish to keep clean and scratch-free, but since when have you taken such obvious domestic considerations into account before making a purchase?



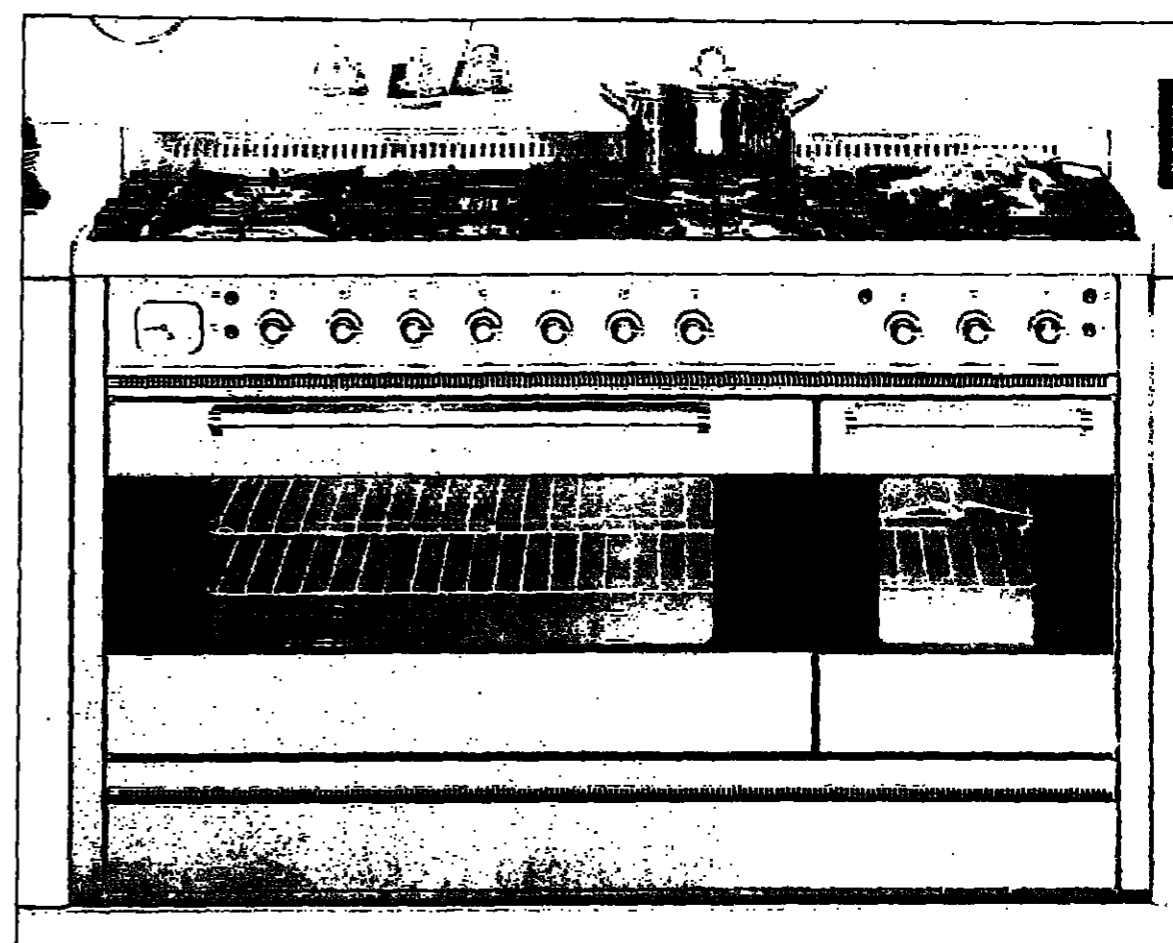
Two into one does go in the Micromat-combi 625, £495, AEG (01635 572 700)



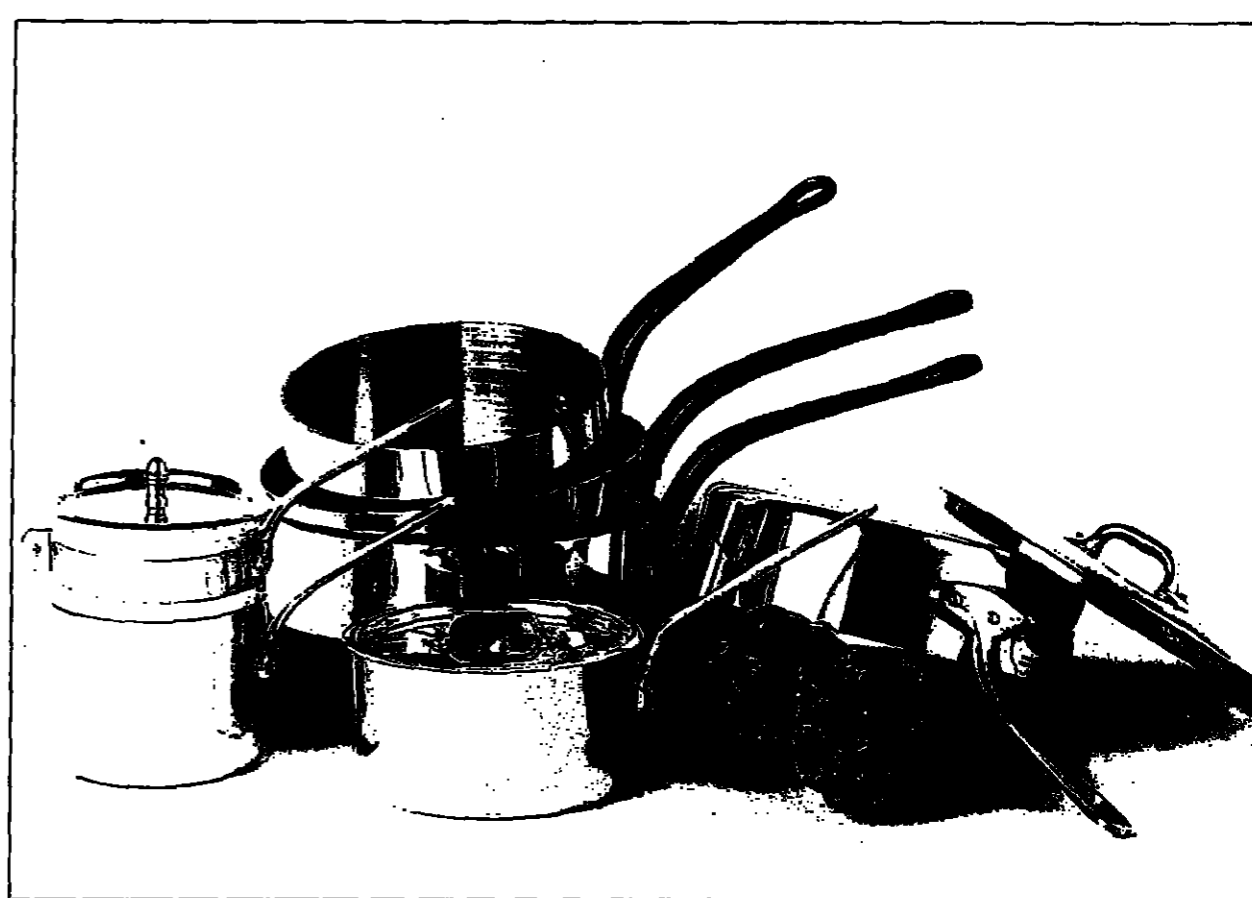
Europiccola espresso maker, £360, La Pavoni (0171-722 7648)



Classique Cordless KT1 kettle, £39.99, Breville (0800 525 089)



Cook up a storm with the SI-12TBF-SS Barbecue, £3,000, Britannia (01253 471 111)



Forget Delia's omelette pan - these seriously sturdy Cuprinox copper pans are for real men, ICTC (01603 488 015)

Look sharp
Name: Global knife block and eight-piece knife set.
Price: £395.
Stockist: John Lewis (0171-629 7711 for nearest store).
Description: If onions had feelings, then they'd probably forgive you for skinning them alive with one of these razor sharp implements. Designed by Komin Yamada in 1985, each knife is created from a single piece of stainless steel: a tapered, spotty handle seamlessly merging into a finely honed blade. As

This 60cm-wide stainless steel beauty is conscientious (its Aquatech cleaning system actively seeks out and destroys food deposits), ecologically-considerate (it uses 14 litres of water per wash and has a quick wash programme), and user-friendly (the bottom basket includes a foldable plate rack to make space for blackened casserole dishes).

Style: ★★★★★
Anything else worth considering? Smeg (01235 861 090) do a range of neatly designed dishwashers. Their stainless steel eight-programme machine, the 60cm-wide DWF1 (£599) holds 12 place settings, includes Aquastop flood protection,

employs an air fan condenser for drying, and has nice chunky steel knobs. It's only let down by the fact that it's a gas-guzzler, using as much as 18 litres of water per wash.

Let them eat shrimps
Name: Britannia SI-12TBF-SS Barbecue.
Price: £3,000 (plus £990 for a 120cm hood).
Stockist: 01253 471 111.
Description: Indoor barbie! The five gas-burner hot plate on this 120cm cooker comes with an added extra: an electric lava stone barbecue, perfect for when you've wasted an entire box of strikes trying to light

your rusty one in the back garden. To the right of the main, 90cm oven, is a small 30cm second oven, which has a rotisserie for spit-roasting. Or, if you're of the veggie persuasion, you can always use it for finishing off a Victoria sponge. What do you mean, you don't know how to make cakes? Didn't you learn anything from King Alfred's incompetence?

Style: ★★★★★
Anything else worth considering? Smeg's 90cm dual-fuel, single fronted A1 cooker (£1,275, 01235 861 090) is a substantial machine. The hob has five gas-burners (including one for fish and an ultra-rapid one for burning stuff on), while the fan-

assisted electric oven has a bottom element to make sure the food you've carbonised on top is at least defrosted in the middle. If that all sounds like too much hard work, then you can opt for a combination microwave/oven instead. AEG's 850-watt Micromat-combi 625 (£495, 01635 572 700) looks good, and defrosts, microwaves and roasts.

THOSE LITTLE EXTRAS
Don't forget the morning after: the best coffee and toast come courtesy of La Pavoni's Europiccola espresso maker (£360, 0171-722 7648) and Siemens Porsche-designed TT 9110 cool wall, two-slice toaster (£29,

01908 328 400). It's got 900 turbo-charged watts under the bonnet plus 11-stage browning control with LED indicators, and the capacity to hold bread up to a satisfying doorstop thickness of 34mm.

For those preferring a cup of Earl Grey to start the day, there are several good stainless steel kettles on the market. The best bargain is Breville's Classique Cordless KT1 (£39.99, 0800 525 089), which holds 3.4 pints of water, has a removable filter, a concealed element and a tasteful green on-off button.

Shaun Phillips
Deputy Editor ZM Magazine

CHECK IT OUT TRADITIONAL WELSH LOVESPOONS

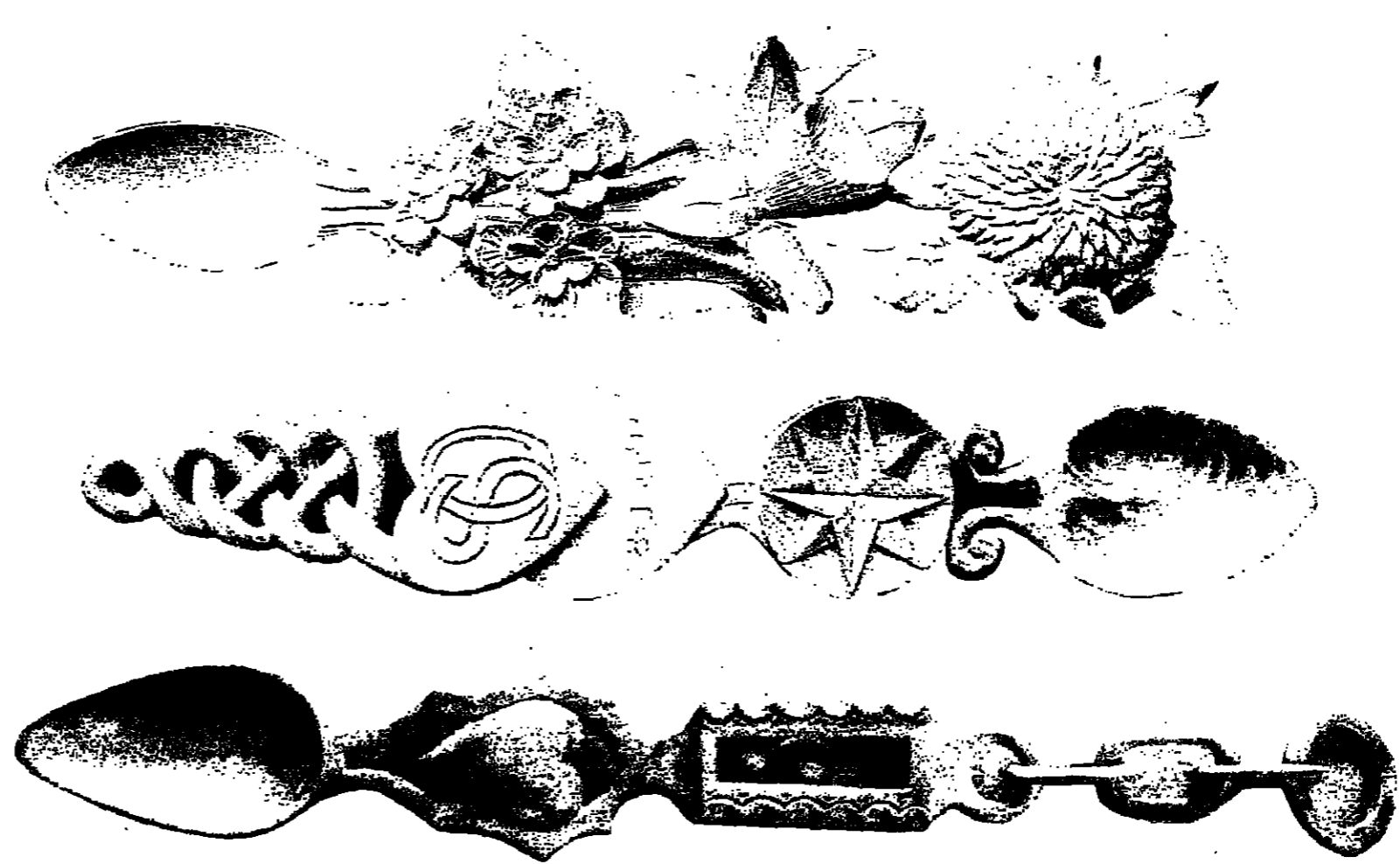
LOVERS HAVE given each other wooden love tokens since ancient times. In Wales these were often in the form of wooden cawl (soup) spoons. Young men in rural areas carved them to give to women as a prelude to courtship: they were illiterate, so the spoons were their love letters. The designs were often copied from the pewter and silver spoons used by the gentry. When a woman accepted a lovespoon, she would hang it over the mantelpiece for all to see.

During the 17th century, Welsh lovespoons became more elaborate, incorporating initials, dates and symbols. The bowl was developed at the expense of the bowl to make more room for the carver to show off his skills and demonstrate the depth of his desire. Some spoons had two bowls, meaning "we two are one". Common symbols included a heart representing love; a wheel promising "I will work for you"; a key for "my house is yours"; or an anchor meaning "I want to stay". Celtic designs, with their unbroken, stylised lines carved in relief representing eternal love, or souls entwined for eternity, appear frequently.

These antique lovespoons are rarely sold on the open market, but sometimes can be found at auction. Mark Stephen of Sotheby's says about 30 to 40 spoons a year come up for auction across the country, and cost from £300 to £3,000.

Alternatively, you can buy one-off, hand-crafted contemporary spoons. Lovespoon making is undergoing something of a revival, with makers like Arthur Llewellyn Thomas, and Peter and Lynnette Coupland, designing and carving spoons to commission (from £40 to £600).

Arthur Thomas started making lovespoons in his Cardiff workshop 25 years ago, after visitors from Australia said they would like an individually designed spoon. He uses traditional timbers, mainly sycamore and



Lovespoons by Arthur Llewellyn Thomas (top and centre, 01222 341 706) and Peter and Lynnette Coupland (bottom, 01656 659 264)

fruit woods. One of Mr Thomas's favourite commissions is an anniversary spoon, which took two weeks to make from one piece of pale lime wood: "It has six chain links representing 60 years, two balls in a cage for the happy couple wrapped or trapped in love, and a wild rose on the front. My little guy was to put a thorn in the side."

When you buy a handmade lovespoon, make sure it is the genuine article by looking at the shape. It should be curved in profile like a metal spoon and is usually carved on the back. Batch-produced souvenir lovespoons are flat-backed to enable machines to cut them out before they are finished by hand. Castle Crafts in Cardiff and the Lovespoon Gallery in Mumbles sell these spoons (starting at £2) as well as commissioned spoons.

Visit the Museum of Welsh Life in St Fagan's, just outside Cardiff, if you want to check out one of the best collections of antique lovespoons. It includes the oldest known lovespoon, which is dated 1667. No bigger than a modern dessert spoon, it has a hollowed-out handle with six free-floating carved wooden balls and has developed a rich mellow patina through 300 years of handling.

In Welsh folklore, the balls symbolise the number of children the suitor hopes for. So if you receive a copy of this spoon on Valentine's Day (£120, from the museum shop), you know where his spooning might end.

JILLY ALLENBY

Castle Welsh Crafts, Cardiff (01222 343 038); The Lovespoon Gallery, Mumbles (01792 360132); Museum of Welsh Life (01222 573 500); Antique spoons: Sotheby's (01403 833 500); Avon Antiques, Bradford on Avon (01225 863052); Spoon makers: Arthur Llewellyn Thomas, Cardiff (01222 341 706); Peter and Lynnette Coupland, Bridgend (01656 659 264)

Paying for a life of grime

There are dangerous people out there – DIY enthusiasts trying to boost the value of their homes. By Penny Jackson

Some people a hammer and they will be nailing shelves to the wall before you can draw breath. No one can accuse the British of a lack of enthusiasm when it comes to DIY home repairs, but they may be a little wanting on the quality front if the evidence of a television programme broadcast by ITV last week is anything to go by.

Collapsing walls, sloping shelves and years of little progress dogged the worst of the "Do it Yourselfers" who amazingly still managed to show real pride in their work despite its dubious execution. All this is fine, of course, if the DIYers stay put, but rather more worrying if they decide to sell and a buyer isn't in on the secret.

David McKenna, who runs a building company in Bromley, Kent, has become suspicious of the number of jobs carried out by what he is told are cowboy builders who have done a bunk. "One look at the dodgy tools lying around and it's a reasonable guess that it was, in fact, the owner who messed up the job. Doors are always being hung upside down, and I've seen new openings for windows propped up with bits of wood because nobody thought to put in lintels."

But at least he is called in to put things right. The buyers of a huge, newly converted Victorian house in south-east London will not be so lucky. "The owner works in the theatre but has done all the work himself. It is horrendous. Nothing has been done properly, but the worst of it is that when the painting is done and the floors sanded, it will fool anyone who doesn't get beneath the surface."

Some of the construction work McKenna sees beggars belief. "At the moment I am spending every day looking at an appalling extension built by the owner. Someone must have told him he needed air bricks for a flat roof, but instead of using a couple each side he has used them all the way round.

I counted 30 on one wall. People will spend a fortune on materials and then build a wall that looks like the leaning tower of Pisa."

Jokes about DIY enthusiasts have worn a bit thin for Jane Grant. She has become familiar with pretty well every builder's merchant in the Derby area over the past two years as well as the sight of her husband Rod on his hands and knees cursing at some pipe or wire. They took on the challenge of converting vast old offices into a family home and between them have tackled every job, apart from the damp-proofing. "We must be bonkers. It has taken over our lives because every moment we are not at our jobs we are working on the house. At the beginning the prospect of turning

'Owners blame cowboy builders who have done a bunk. But one look and you know they did it'

somewhere with loads of space into something special was very exciting, but since then we have had sleepless nights. We've been tired, fed up and ended up arguing. Our three children are used to coming home from school to chaos and we haven't had a holiday for four years."

She lives not a million miles from some of the DIYers featured in the ITV programme but is confident that her husband's workmanship is in a higher league. "Even so, he is self-taught, so he tends to come back from the pub with instructions from an electrician drawn on the back of a cigarette packet. It can take a whole day to get one light to work. I do the rushing around and spend hours in plumber's merchants trying to describe what sort of pipe we need. The hardest lessons



Jane and Rod Grant in their Derby home: 'It has taken over our lives'

are that everything costs far more than you imagine, and you have to finish one job before starting on the next, however tempting it is to start on the fun things. But there have been wonderful moments, such as discovering a lovely marble fireplace under layers of paint."

The area just north of Derby is particularly popular with DIYers, with a terrific demand for unmodernised houses, according to Chris Brown of Boxall Brown & Jones. But he warns buyers that the Grants' experience is all too common. "It is hard to price a job if you are not sure what is involved and so you have to be prepared to spend up to 50 per cent more than you had anticipated," he says.

Fear of injury or worse deters most people from tackling plumbing and electrical jobs, but cosmetic work can be done better than by some in the trade. Many of the time-consuming and costly restoration jobs can be done gradually and to enormous effect – handwork that genuinely impresses. But this purposeful approach is rather different from the equivalent in the home of the man who is always tinkering with his car. Henry Woods, of the London estate agents Douglas & Gordon, says that, although some owners never stop "improving" their property, after 20 years they haven't managed to change the lead pipes.

In residential areas where property values have risen quickly in a short time, there is a temptation for people to become investor/builders overnight. The advice from agents is that thorough checks should be made on such places before buying. They may appear perfect, with paint sparkling, but that's of little comfort if you get an electric shock every time that you take a shower. South of the river is particularly ripe territory for London's DIY entrepreneurs, says Mr Woods. "I walked into one flat to find a man holding an enormous saw designed for cutting logs. He was trying to cut a thin ply-and-Formica top with it. The whole kitchen was terrible, a complete disaster and held together roughly with nails. The couple were doing it up to sell. Needless to say it didn't."

STEPPING STONES ONE COUPLE'S PROPERTY STORY



'Friends thought we were mad to buy' – Mandy and Syd

MANDY EVANS, a TV producer, and her partner Syd – who have bought three properties since 1984 – were the first of their peers to buy, but were surprised at friends' reactions. "One said: 'You're really stupid.' They thought we were mad," Mandy remembers.

However, their only alternative was a squalid rented flat in Hackney; and Mandy believes that their backgrounds also influenced them: "Our parents had bought, so we thought we should." She admits to a certain naivety about the process: "We were told we could borrow up to £50,000 but we didn't dare: it seemed such a lot of money at the time."

They viewed only two properties and plumped for the second, a converted, ground-floor two-bedroom flat overlooking Hackney's main road, which cost £28,000. The flat, in a listed building, had certain advantages: "It was close to friends and the flower market and near a good pub and fish-and-chip shop. There was even a bingo club if I got desperate," Mandy recalls.

The couple lived there for six years but found the community feeling starting to fade: "We were burgled and my car was broken into every Friday night because of the disco-pubs."

Finally, a combination of the flower market's popularity – "you couldn't move on Sunday mornings" – and the mugging of nurses living next door prompted Mandy and Syd to move. They sold their

flat for £27,000, "to a reporter from *The Sun*, which made it even better," and moved to Blackheath. This time they viewed at least 70 properties before settling on a huge top-floor flat in a semi-detached house built in 1937. The property, uninhabited since the great storm of 1987, still bore the scars: "The roof tiles were ripped off and it had flooded. Our friend insisted that a huge stain on the carpet was the result of a murder."

In 1990 they paid £94,000 for the flat, which they loved for its "four big, square rooms".

In 1996 they decided on a second home in the "forgotten" resort of Broadstairs. They paid £39,000 for a two-bedroom house built in 1800. They now enjoy the benefits of a London flat and a coastal retreat: "It's stretched us, and the dying ferry industry means prices have not risen, but it's worth it."

GINETTA VEDRICKAS

Those moves in brief...
1984 – bought Hackney flat for £28,000, sold for £27,000.
1990 – bought Blackheath flat for £94,000, now worth around £160,000.
1997 – bought second home in Broadstairs for £39,000. No increase in value.

If you would like your moves featured, write to: *Nic Cicuttii, Stepping Stones, The Independent, 1 Canada Sq, London E14 5DL. A prize of £100 will be awarded for the best story published before 31 March.*

What price paradise?

The Caribbean is the latest hotspot for holiday homes. By Mary Wilson

FUNNY, ISN'T it, the way the notion of a sun-drenched Caribbean beach shaded by palm trees becomes more inviting during the course of a freezing British winter? Perhaps not. The chain of islands that makes up the West Indies stretches from Florida right down to Venezuela, offering varying destinations from the vibrantly colourful to the restfully laid-back.

As it becomes easier and cheaper to get there – it is now possible to fly for as little as £250 – high-quality estates are being developed on a number of the islands. Buying early into one of these could be a very good investment indeed, with a ready-made strong rental market and rising values.

"We originally bought at Royal Westmoreland, a development in Barbados, because of the good climate and great infrastructure," says one of the development's home-owners. "Since making our investment less than two-and-a-half years ago, our capital appreciation has increased by more than 70 per cent – or a staggering £1m over rental returns."

Barbados, the most easterly of the islands, has two excellent developments, one of which is based around an 18-hole golf course and another that is set around a man-made lagoon with apartments and villas right on the water, with their own moorings.

Royal Westmoreland, on the west coast, is a 500-acre resort where around 280 villas and apartments are being built. Of these, about 100 are completed, and 11 of the latest development are detached and semi-detached three-bedroom villas guaranteed to be the millennium.



Villa thriller: the Royal Westmoreland, in Barbados

no building work is carried out beside completed homes – and, by the end of next year, the majority will be quiet and free from construction," says Giles Rooney, the sales and marketing director.

The resort has a health and leisure club, a children's club, a bar and a restaurant, tennis courts and swimming-pools. Prices range from £600,000 (about £275,000) for a two-bedroom villa to £1,500,000 for a five-bedroom fairway home with swimming pool.

Port St Charles, near Speightstown, is further north. Phases one and two are already built and sold, and 20-or-so people are already regularly using their homes. A total of 114 waterfront apartments and townhouses are being constructed, some of which are on an island in the lagoon. This is where the restaurant and bar, due to open in June, will be situated; there will also be two tennis courts and a gym.

"The majority of our foreign owners are English, with the others being a mixture of Canadian, Italian, American and, of course, locals," says

Harry Manning, of Harry Manning Associates, the local agent. There are also British agents, in the form of Humberts and Christopher Scott. Prices range from \$345,000 for a one-bedroom lagoon-front apartment to \$6,500,000 for a four-bedroom beach-front villa.

The most southerly islands are Tobago and Trinidad, only a few miles from the South American coast and out of the hurricane path. Tobago is the quieter of the two – "Trinidadians go there to 'chill out'."

Much of the 30-mile-long island is hilly and covered with rainforest – a beautiful, unspoiled place with idyllic beaches, some hardly used. Tobago has some of the best diving in the world, and developers are encouraged to protect this valuable asset.

On the south-western side, the development of the 750-acre Lowlands Estate is under way. This is near the capital, Scarborough, and the airport, and boasts its own long, wide, sandy beach. Prices start at about £100,000 for a plot of land and £77,000 for a four-bedroom single-storey villa. A much larger, four-to-five-bedroom

two-storey villa would cost £180,000, with the plot costing about £130,000. "We expect there to be serious rental potential for these properties," comments Charles Weston-Baker, of the agents FPD Savills, which is inviting offers for the development. A five-star Hilton hotel and the first show villas will be ready in November, as will the golf course; about 60 apartments and 40 plots have already been sold to Trinidadians.

The prettiest part of Tobago is in the north, and this is where the King's Bay Estate development is. Among the 600 acres of cocoa, palm and immortal trees, a small number of villas will be built, all with stunning views over the bay. In the first phase, there will be 25 large two-storey villas, all in plots of three-quarters of an acre.

The Great House, an old plantation house, is to be converted into a five-star restaurant; and down by the beach there will be a few cottages, which will form the hotel, with a beach bar and a restaurant. There will also be tennis courts, diving facilities, a nine-hole golf course and riding. Work starts on 1 April (really!), and a show house will be ready by August. The Prestige Property Group, the sole agent in Britain, is selling the first phase for £225,000 to £325,000.

The Tobago developments will be shown at the International Property Show (01420 520777), today and tomorrow at the Cumberland Hotel, Marble Arch, London W1. Royal Westmoreland: 0171-292 5000; Prestige Property Group: 01935 825770; FPD Savills: 0171-408 5517; Harry Manning Assoc: 001 246 424 2661; Christopher Scott: 01983 721777; Humberts: 0171-629 0909

PROPERTY: RESIDENTIAL

Herefordshire	To Let	To Let
HEREFORD Main front portion Grade II Listed Georgian home. Rural location 10 minutes city and excellent local schools. Half hour M5. 4 bedrooms, 3 acres, cellars, outbuildings, garage, pond, woods. £300,000 Tel: 01432 340036	REGENT LETTING LTD Tel: 0171 916 0313 Fax: 0171 916 1607 LANDLORDS SPECIAL RATES 8% No Fee To Tenants 6-12 Camden Rd London NW1 9EA	CAMDEN ROAD, NW1 One bedroom flat, bathroom, fitted kitchen and lounge, heating and hot water inclusive. Available now. £165pw FONTHILL ROAD, N4 One double bedroom flat in Finsbury Park, lounge, fitted kitchen. Available now. £165pw HOE STREET, N17 Two bedroom flat, open plan kitchen with large lounge, bathroom. £165pw OSNEY CRESENT, NW5 Large one bedroom flat in Camden, good size lounge, fitted kitchen. Available in March. £195pw SWAINS LANE, N6 Two bedroom flat near transport, large lounge, fitted kitchen, washing machine. Available now. £240pw CAMDEN ROAD, NW1 Two double bedrooms flat in Camden, large separate lounge with fully fitted kitchen and washing machine. Available now. £260pw PAVELEY STREET, NW5 Three bedroom flat, very large lounge, fully fitted kitchen with dining area, bathroom. £310pw GLOUCESTER PLACE, W1 Lovely three bedroom flat in zone 1, fully fitted kitchen with washing machine, two reception rooms. 24 hour porter, can be for four people. Available. £450pw ST AUGUSTINES RD, NW1 Beautiful eight bedroom house in a good location with very large lounge, fully fitted kitchen diner. AVAILABLE NOW, MUST BE SEEN!!!! £700pw

London Property	Overseas Property
MULBERRY COURT 15 PLUMBERS ROW LONDON E1 A PRIME INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITY! LUXURY APARTMENTS 9% GROSS RENTAL GUARANTEE FOR 1 YEAR! FROM £115,995 6.49% FIXED 10 YEAR INVESTMENT MORTGAGES! OPENING WEEKEND SAT 10th - SUN 11th FEBRUARY '99 CALLIARD HOMES LTD 0171 375 0427	METAXATA VILLAS CEPHALONIA • GREECE <i>An invitation to enjoy...</i> • Stylish studios, apartments and luxury villas for sale • Superb facilities include swimming pool and tennis court • Unsurpassed quality • Prices start from only £39,000 See us at: International Property Show Cumberland Hotel, London 12th-14th February 01420 570777
SHAW & CO Docklands E14, 2000 sq ft, 5/level penthouse, overlooking Thames. 3 beds, 25ft lounge, dining room, fitted kit, 2 bath/wc and cloak, 3 terraces, parking, gym and pool. £250,000 F/B Tel: 0181 986 7225	SPACIOUS EDWARDIAN 1st floor maisonette with character. 3 beds, huge living room. 2CV & 2CV2 garage throughout. Close to transport and Victoria. £177,000. Ring Meg on 01932 856776 (even/weekend) or 0171 643 1426 (day)
Shropshire STONE COTTAGE for complete renovation. Lovely views. Cash buyers. 01891 774082	COSTA BLANCA Los Alcazares. Top quality new villas and apartments for sale from £25k. For brochure and view contact the UK sole agents Rockwell Villa Sales. Inspection trip arranged. 0800 761 082 513458 or 01753 4908 175345 jpw@rockwell.co.uk

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HOT SPOT
VICTORIA PARK, EAST LONDON

A tale of Victorian values

Adam Kay is a husband, a father and a triathlete. When he was scouring Bethnal Green for a flat, however, it was the last of these categories which proved the most influential - and St Agnes Close, off Gore Road, near Victoria Park fitted the bill.

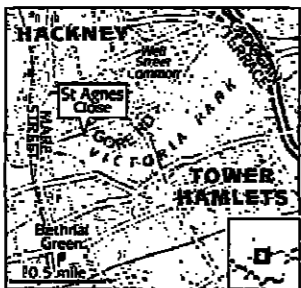
A 300 acre park was yards from his front door, the City was just 10 minutes by bicycle, and the flat appealed for other reasons, too.

It is in a modern block that was specifically designed to maximise light, heat and privacy, and his freeholder doesn't bicker over repairs or otherwise exploit the tenants.

His property is one of many in the area owned by the Crown Estate. "I definitely have the best land in the country," says Mr Kay.

Marriage, a baby and a move to suburbia revealed that Victoria Park was also a good investment: "I paid £50,000 in 1985. Last year it was re-evaluated for mortgage purposes at £95,000," says Mr Kay.

Most London parks are bordered by residential roads. The boot-shaped Victoria Park,



which extends from South Hackney into Tower Hamlets just east of Bethnal Green, has limited park-side housing, but there are compensations: two canals border the park, bringing waterside properties and warehouse conversions into the picture.

Just across the park, Well Street Common is encircled by handsome park-side homes. Victoria Park was a neglected, vandalised wreck in the Seventies and early Eighties, until Tower Hamlets council spruced it up. Private housing, where council estates used to be, further enhanced the quality of the area.

"Kingshold estate was the worst, and it and some other bad ones came down," notes

Philip Castle, a director of Sovereign House estate agents. "Lauriston School is a highly regarded state secondary school," he adds, noting that the young professionals who are attracted to the area because of its proximity to the City include families as well as singles.

"But Victorian houses are scarce and expensive, usually available only when the occupier dies and the Crown Estate sells them off."

The best Victorian houses can sell for more than £300,000, but flats are much cheaper: "The older properties are more fashionable and expensive, but generally one-bedroom conversions sell for £50,000-£70,000, and two bedrooms jump to £110,000," declares Mr Castle. "Parkside is a nice local authority estate. Two- and three-bedroom flats are available there in the £55,000-£65,000 range."

At the eastern edge of the park, Cadogan Terrace backs on to a motorway, but even in this location £300,000 might not be enough to buy a large family house.

ROBERT LIEBMAN The best Victorian houses in the Victoria Park region sell for more than £300,000



THE LOW-DOWN

Prices: A three-bedroom loft in a converted warehouse overlooking the canal and Victoria Park is available at £145,000 at Keatons estate agents. Similar money can buy a three-bedroom freehold house (£140,000), while an additional £35,000 buys a two-bedroom flat occupying the upper two storeys of a Victorian house. In mid-March, Copthorn is releasing the third phase of Victoria Place at New

Kingshold. Estate agents Sovereign will have price and other information on the two-, three-, and four-bedroom houses and two-bedroom flats.

Transport: The overall area is served by the Underground (Bethnal Green and Mile End Central Line stations are in zone two) or the overground (Cambridge Heath, Bethnal Green, Homerton and Hackney Wick stations). The motorway adjacent to

Cadogan Terrace is the A102(M) for Blackwall Tunnel.

Shopping and dining: Well Street has a supermarket and popular outdoor market, and Victoria Park Village has trendy boutiques and restaurants. Mare Street, Hackney, is a bustling high street.

The park: Victoria Park has a running track and changing rooms, tennis courts, fishing, pitches for cricket,

hockey football and softball, playgrounds, a deer enclosure, an Old English Garden and a One O'Clock Club. The park's interesting history is related in the handsome park brochure (available on 0171-364 4951 from Crown Estates; Internet address: <http://www.crownestate.co.uk>). "Property owned by the sovereign of the United Kingdom 'in right of the Crown' with origins dating back

almost 1,000 years." The park properties were purchased mainly between 1842 and 1845 and include 611 residences, public houses and other commercial premises. Council tax: Hackney charges more than Tower Hamlets; respective charges are £526 and £439 for Band A and £1,579 and £1,318 for Band E. Estate agents: Keatons: 0181-981 7788; Sovereign House: 0181-985 5800.

THREE TO VIEW

COUNTRY COTTAGES UNDER £100,000

TAKE YOUR pick: £97,500 will buy a garage in Chelsea, but it could also get you The Hollies, a three-bedroom, Victorian terraced cottage in a small hamlet near the River Severn in Gloucestershire. Riverbank walks are just a few minutes away from the brick cottage, which has views across open countryside. Shops and pubs are in the nearby villages of Saul and Frampton-on-Severn. The cottage has a sitting/dining room (originally two rooms) with a floor-to-ceiling stone fireplace and Parkray multi-fuel stove. There is a kitchen diner with built-in Neff hob/cooker, downstairs loo and upstairs bathroom. Details from Murrys (01453 75552).



ALTERNATIVELY, £85,000 will buy Plumbers Cottage, a Grade II listed, one-bedroom, end-of-terrace house in Much Hadham, Hertfordshire. Almost 300 years old, it forms part of a yard which was converted into homes and has a small private garden, along with use of a larger communal garden. Six miles from Bishop's Stortford and the mainline station to Liverpool Street (about 40 minutes), the traditional weather-boarded cottage has a sitting-room cum kitchen with linden oak units and a spiral staircase to the first floor. The upper landing features a vaulted ceiling, as does the 13ft by 10ft bedroom. There's parking for two cars. Call Mullucks on 01279 755400.



FOR £94,950, you can buy Church Cottage, a Grade II listed, black-and-white thatched cottage at Burghill, which is just four miles from Hereford. The house has been completely restored, and it features a 13ft dining room with original stone-flagged fireplace, quarry-tiled floor and exposed ceiling and wall timbers. There's a separate sitting room, a fitted kitchen and a downstairs bathroom. Upstairs, one of the two bedrooms is actually a 12ft 9in by 12ft 6in landing. Outside, there is a garden with climbing roses and an apple tree. In addition, there is a utility room as well as a shed, and planning permission for a driveway and garage has been obtained. Further details from Bill Jackson (01432 344779).

ROSALIND RUSSELL

TEL: 0171 293 2222

PROPERTY: RESIDENTIAL

FAX: 0171 293 2505

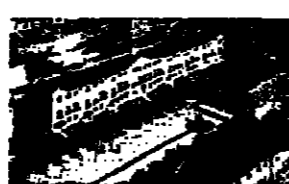
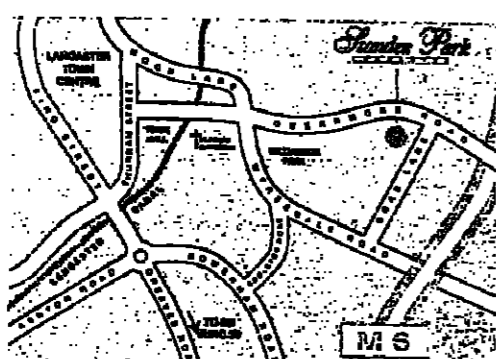
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- Fifty one New Build 3, 4 and 5 bedroom homes that are spread throughout the landscaped grounds: Prices from £99,950 to £325,000.



Standen Park House



ALL ENQUIRIES:



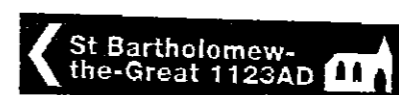
Piazza View Home opens Sat 20th - Sun 21st February from 10.00am to 5.00pm.

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